GIFT IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY STRAGGLERS, PGS 13-20

Celebrity Buzz

Freeman treats self with jet

pg 30

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NCOUVER • THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2009 metronews.ca

Style pg 22

Fashion stunners and duds of past year

Undercover Project Larceny nets 31 arrests

CRIME Police have made 31 arrests after a lengthy undercover operation where they posed as fencers and bought stolen goods in the Downtown Eastside.

Project Larceny utilized an undercover officer to gain the trust of the alleged thieves, who, according to Inspector Les Yeo, are mostly drug addicts, fuelling their addiction by stealing and selling property.

Yeo said the root of the problem is people's willingness to buy stolen goods.

"If you buy a $2,000 laptop for $50 there is an assumption you know it's stolen," Yeo warned.

Many of the alleged thieves arrested following the undercover campaign, which began in May 2009, are prolific offenders and known to police.

STIG NIELSEN/
FOR METRO VANCOUVER

St. Paul's

Special visitor

KRISTEN THOMPSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Jesse Downs, 3, cuddles next to his mother, Jane — holding newborn Maggie — during a visit with Santa at St. Paul's Hospital Wednesday. The jolly old elf was visiting the maternity ward to deliver blankets and toys to Vancouver's Christmas babies. Story, page 2

Group seeks end to caregiver program

Filipino women say situation for live-in workers 'fatally flawed'

KRISTEN THOMPSON
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Members of Vancouver's Filipino community are calling for an end to Canada's live-in caregiver program (LCP) because they say it exploits women and divides families, especially at Christmas.

Indhay Suelo left her husband and daughter in the Philippines in 2008 to work under Citizenship and Immigration's LCP, a temporary work program that facilitates the employment of foreign recruits as live-in caregivers.

Suelo said she worked six days a week and slept in a windowless storage room with a light that couldn't be turned off, so she covered it with a black garbage bag at night.

"(My employer) threatened to deport me if I quit my job," Suelo said. "I felt hopeless."

Geraldine Pratt, a professor at the University of B.C. who has been researching the LCP, said many women like Suelo receive low wages, work long hours without overtime pay and can't bring their families to Canada until they've completed 3,900 hours of live-in work within four years.

On Dec. 12, the federal government made changes to the LCP, eliminating the second medical exam required to apply for permanent residency and requiring that employers cover workers' travel and medical costs and provide signed contracts that clearly outline work hours.

ShareYourViews
vancouverletters@metronews.ca

But Pratt said the changes are cosmetic and workers' rights are still "precarious."

Because they don't have permanent status, they fear deportation if they complain about their work or living conditions, and they are not allowed to pursue any kind of education.

Gloria Remirata, a high school teacher from the Philippines who was separated from her children for six years while she worked in the LCP, said she was forced into the program "to survive," not realizing it would rip her family apart.

"I missed every single occasion like birthdays, graduations," she said, breaking down in tears.

"It's important that families be together, especially at this time of year."

Christina Panis, with the Philippine Women Centre of B.C., said there is an alternative to this "fatally flawed program" and it starts with universal child care.

She and opponents of the LCP are calling for a program that allows foreign workers permanent residency with their families, with the ability to use their skills and education in a field of their choice.

Three Hydro workers hurt in manhole explosion

SEAN KOLENKO
for Metro Vancouver

INVESTIGATION An underground explosion in downtown Vancouver at about noon on Wednesday resulted in three B.C. Hydro employees being taken to hospital, with two being treated for severe burns.

Susan Danard, a spokeswoman for B.C. Hydro, said the three men were working in a manhole at a switching station, which controls wiring for the city. They were not working on live equipment. At no time was any power cut out.

Danard would not confirm the extent of the injuries suffered by the men, but speculated that one of the injured would be released Wednesday evening after being treated for smoke inhalation. The other two workers will remain in hospital with more severe injuries.

The explosion happened beneath the intersection of Seymour and West Georgia streets, leaving the intersection closed and backing up traffic on Georgia Street for hours in both directions.

Fire officials later speculated that the blast was the result of an electrical problem.

An investigation into the explosion began Wednesday afternoon and is being led by WorkSafe B.C.

Scott McCloy, a spokesman for WorkSafe B.C., could not say how long the investigation would take but did say that they would be looking for "any breaches of the Health and Safety Act that could have contributed to the accident."

This is the first major incident for B.C. Hydro since a manhole fire last July that left many office buildings and traffic lights in the downtown core without power for more than a day.

News on the Move

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Happy Holidays

Look for our special Boxing Day issue Saturday. We will resume publishing Monday, Jan. 4, 2010

Entertainment pg 23

It's Complicated mature fun

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Local

BCLC seeks Langley lotto winner

The B.C. Lottery Corporation wants to give someone in Langley $6.7 million. The person bought a winning 6-49 ticket for the Dec. 19 draw. The jackpot was $13.3 million and will be split with a winner in Quebec.

METRO VANCOUVER

METRO INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
2009 Festival of Media Awards

News in brief

INJURIES A 23-year-old Surrey driver was airlifted to hospital Tuesday in critical condition after he lost control while speeding on 176th Street in Surrey. The car hit a culvert, launched through the air and landed on its side in a water-filled ditch. His passenger was also taken to hospital in serious condition.

CHARGES A 38-year-old man who allegedly went on a half-hour crime spree Tuesday evening has been arrested and charged with two counts of break and enter and one count of sexual assault. Police believe the man's crimes began around 9 p.m. when he allegedly groped a 19-year-old woman.

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WHAT'S ONLINE TODAY

Video The Canadian Press names Stephen Harper its Newsmaker of the Year at **metronews.ca/canada**

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Extra	37, 76, 92, 95

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SEAN KOLENKO/FOR METRO VANCOUVER

The Burrard Pacific Breeze, Vancouver's newest SeaBus, makes its first official voyage from Lonsdale Quay to Waterfront Station Wednesday morning.

'We need that service'

North Shore mayor urges 3 permanent SeaBuses

SEAN KOLENKO
for Metro Vancouver

It was the maiden voyage for the new SeaBus Wednesday morning, and while the recent addition to the fleet had TransLink executives celebrating, the sailing left others with more questions than answers.

"The critical issue here is what happens after the Games," said North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto. "How soon are we going to be back to three SeaBuses? How soon are we going to see the extended service?"

TransLink plans to run all three of its vessels, including the new Burrard Pacific Breeze, as of Feb. 8. They will be in use until the end of the Games. After the Olympics, one of the two original vessels, the Burrard Otter or Beaver, will be taken out the rotation and, according to TransLink, sold.

"We need that service," added Mussatto, underwhelmed that one vessel will be taken away from service. "It's what we've been lobbying for. We need that funding."

TransLink spokesperson Drew Snider, while acknowledging the wants of the North Shore mayor, said the decision to return to two buses after the Games is strictly financial.

"One just has to be retired, although I know the folks on the North Shore don't want to hear that," said Snider. "Because of budgetary constraints, we're just not able to operate all three after the Games."

The price tag on the new ship was $25.5 million. While TransLink funded the lion's share of the boat's cost, both the federal and provincial governments gave $5 million apiece to the project.

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Woman tells cautionary tale after losing Yorkshire puppies

KENNEL A Vancouver woman is warning would-be pet owners to be careful when buying a dog from a breeder this holiday season after she fell in love with — and subsequently lost — two puppies.

Breanne Erhardt said she bought a purebred Yorkshire terrier named Gonzo for $900 from Lumby-based kennel Small Paws on the Ridge.

A month later, on Oct. 27, Gonzo died suddenly of what her vet said was likely a liver shunt, said Erhardt.

"(I was) a complete wreck," said Erhardt, who called the breeder, Connie Vosper.

According to Erhardt, Vosper offered half her money back — since there was no proof Gonzo died of a congenital disease — or a new puppy. Erhardt opted for the puppy. An autopsy to confirm the cause of death would have cost Erhardt around $600, she said.

She said Vosper started sending pictures and vet updates of the new dog. The breeder even started calling the puppy by the name Erhardt had chosen.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

Breanne Erhardt's puppy Gonzo.

"On Dec. 19, two days before we were supposed to get the dog, she retracts the offer, claiming a lack of trust in me," Erhardt said. Vospel repeated her offer to give Erhardt $450.

"My stomach just sank," Erhardt said. "I feel I've lost two (puppies) now."

When Metro Vancouver contacted Vosper, she said she had "no comment."

KRISTEN THOMPSON/
METRO VANCOUVER

Jolly old Richards delivers presents

HOSPITAL Some of Vancouver's newest residents got early Christmas gifts yesterday when legendary big band leader Dal Richards popped by St. Paul's Hospital dressed as Santa to deliver blankets and toys.

"My daughter was born in this ward 58 years ago," Richards told Ruth Hartnup as he gave her 12-day-old daughter, Catrin, a pink hand-knitted blanket and stuffed rabbit in the neonatal intensive-care unit.

"She slept through the whole thing, bless her," Hartnup said. "But I'm sure she'll be excited to see the pictures next year."

Richards' daughter joined her father halfway through the visit — an annual event — to help distribute the gifts, which were courtesy of Variety.

"It's a pleasure and joy to do it," Richards said. "Merry Christmas."

KRISTEN THOMPSON/
METRO VANCOUVER

Science World turns on beacon for Santa
On Thursday, Science World will turn on their Christmas lights. At 4 p.m. the numerous LED lights on top of their dome will light up the sky and help guide Santa's sleigh, so that all Vancouver's children will get their gifts on time. METRO VANCOUVER

Travelling? Prepare to be delayed

JEFF HODSON
jeff.hodson@metronews.ca

Forsaking the cold and soggy West Coast winter in favour of topical beaches, sun and surf?

Be prepared for trip cancellations and delays, a local travel expert warned.

Claire Newell said unfortunately for travellers, Canada's peak travel season lays smack dab in the middle of winter.

She recommends buying cancellation insurance and bringing along snacks and entertainment in case your plane needs to be deiced.

"People need to go with a little more patience and be a little more flexible," Newell said.

She said while cancellation insurance may seem expensive; the price may be insignificant if you need to cancel or get home for medical treatment.

The past three to four weeks, she said, have seen a significant cutback in the number of flights, meaning people are being shuffled onto other flights, disrupting itineraries and even holiday plans.

Sam Omidi, 33, of Vancouver, had his Christmas Day flight to Cancun bumped ahead six hours.

His travel partner, who lives in Kamloops, had planned to spend Christmas morning with his family, but instead was flying to Vancouver on Christmas Eve.

Last-minute shopping tips for her

Tips from Camille Vega, 21, manager of Club Monaco at Pacific Centre

Prepare by: "Knowing what she needs over what she wants. Ask her friends if you're not sure, that's always a big help."

Go for: "A dress. Get something you can dress up or down. And, go for neutral colours, they are always very accessible."

Avoid: "Underwear. Just don't do it. A girl likes to get something that gets her excited. Something your grandma buys you is just a bad idea."

Last-minute shopping tips for him

Tips from D.J. Andrada, 32, manager of El Kartel on Robson Street

Prepare by: "I get so many people that don't even know their partner's size. Know it! And, know his favourite colours."

Go for: "You can't go wrong with a T-shirt. It's the most versatile thing in any man's wardrobe."

Avoid: "The hardest things to buy are always shoes and jeans. You just have to try them on."

SEAN KOLENKO/
FOR METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

MAPLE RIDGE A 43-year-old man was to be sentenced Wednesday for violating release conditions related to charges that involved luring and child pornography after a mother spotted her 16-year-old son getting into his car in North Vancouver. He was arrested Nov. 17 in Maple Ridge.

POLL Public opinion about the RCMP has plummeted in British Columbia over the past two years, according to an Angus Reid poll released Wednesday.

DRIVE Glowbal Restaurant Group, which partnered with Union Gospel Mission Wednesday for a Table For 2000 meal in the Downtown Eastside, raised more than 1,000 coats that will be distributed to the homeless. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Judge tells plaintiff to disclose Facebook usage

A New Brunswick judge has ordered a Miramichi, N.B., woman — who said she hasn't been able to return to work full-time — to reveal how often she uses Facebook to a man she's suing after a 2004 car crash, CBC News Online reported. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Canada

Avalanche survivor one year later

Jeff Adams, left, barely survived being buried beneath waves of snow last December in a thundering series of avalanches that ripped him from his snowmobile and entombed eight of his closest friends. A year later, what haunts him most is the questions he'll one day face from their children. "The biggest thing is those kids ... will never know their dads except for from pictures and stories from friends," said the 30-year-old. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Weather key to Games

Organizers preparing for unpredictable Mother Nature

VANCOUVER 2010 **Games**

Olympic organizers want a fairytale experience for the 2010 Winter Games, so the weather they need is what Goldilocks wanted from the three bears' porridge.

It can't be too hot, it can't be too cold. It needs to be just right.

"The weather for us has always been one of our major concerns in sport, it obviously affects our field of play and so anything that affects that is always a concern," said Tim Gayda, vice-president of sports for the Vancouver Olympic organizing committee, in a recent interview.

"We took the weather into consideration way back even in the bid phase, about how we go about planning where the venues are (and) how we schedule the competitions, so the weather is pretty much at the forefront of our minds from years ago."

Too much huffing and puffing from Mother Nature in 2010 could blow the entire Olympic system down.

Adverse weather that forces the delay of an event impacts staff, volunteers, spectators, security, transportation and of course, the athletes.

It could also put a damper on the vision of Vancouver that officials need to help lure tourists back after the Games.

While red mittens might be the appropriate souvenir up in the crisp, snow-capped mountains of Whistler, B.C., the more practical souvenir for Vancouver itself might be the official Olympic umbrella.

On the dates the Games are being held, there's been an average of eight days with no precipitation at all over the last six years.

"The rain has never stopped Vancouver from doing anything, so if we can't play in the rain, we can't do anything so we learned to adjust to it and work with it," said Paul Welsh, general manager of Edelman Vancouver, a communications firm handling marketing for several Olympic-related events and sponsors.

"It could be a shocker if you're not from around here."

There are dozens of outdoor events planned around the Games and planners have been mindful that rain could ruin the fun.

Wary that rain could transform one of the city's sites into a mud hole, Vancouver officials found flooring made from old tires to cover an entire park.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Delays

- Only a few Winter Olympics have been pulled off with no weather delays at all, the most recent being the Lillehammer Games in 1994.

Nova Scotia **Surfing in December**

ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A surfer rides a stand up paddle board on waves at Cow Bay, N.S., near Halifax on Wednesday. The Nova Scotia coast attracts a hardcore group of surfers year round.

White Christmas for most Canadians

WEATHER Most of Canada will see a white Christmas.

But Environment Canada's senior climatologist David Phillips adds about one-quarter of Canadians will see a green Christmas, including Vancouver Island, southern B.C., southern Ontario areas including Toronto, as well as St. John's, N.L.

Phillips says Whistler, will be the resort with the most snow, with the current measurement at 247 cm. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Afghan pullout day looming

TROOPS Canada is heading into what is supposed to be its last full year of combat in Kandahar, just as the U.S. pours thousands more troops into the embattled province in what experts believe will be the ultimate showdown with the Taliban.

The increased fighting is expected to unfold against a backdrop of a widening political controversy in Ottawa over the alleged torture of Afghan prisoners early in the war, what the Conservative government knew about it, and what it did to stop it.

There is no denying 2010 will be the watershed year in the eight-year-old Afghan conflict.

NATO's top commander and architect of the rebooted war strategy said recently it will be the end of 2010 before the allies know if they are winning or losing.

The Conservative government and war-weary Canadians will have a choice to make whether they like it or not: Stick to the country's self-imposed 2011 withdrawal date and perhaps risk alienating the Obama administration; continue with the reconstituted war effort; find some other way to remain meaningfully involved?

Everyone from Prime Minister Stephen Harper on down has taken pains to emphasize that the strategy is to remain involved, but out of combat. It's a position critics question, given Kandahar's tenuous security.

U.S. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who commands the International Security Assistance Force, boldly predicted that by July 2011 NATO will be able to turn to the Afghans and declare that the Taliban "will not win."

Coincidentally that's when Washington plans to begin drawing down its own troop numbers, a timetable that dovetails with Ottawa's long-stated exit goal. THE CANADIAN PRESS

6,000 There are 6,000 Canadian, U.S. and Afghan combat troops in Kandahar province and a Washington-based think-tank estimated last fall as many as 15,800 more would be needed to stem the insurgent tide.

More people leaving Alberta than moving in

MIGRATION Saddled with dwindling employment and shrinking energy prices, Alberta seems to be losing its status as the promised land for job-seekers from across Canada.

For more than a decade the province's resource-rich economy has drawn in hundreds of thousands of people from Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador and elsewhere.

But Statistics Canada's third-quarter population estimate for 2009 shows more people left Alberta for other provinces than moved in.

That's the first time that has happened since 1994.

Douglas Porter, deputy chief economist with the Bank of Montreal, says the province was pulling in almost 50,000 people a year from other provinces at the height of the energy boom.

"It is an amazing turnaround from as recently as three years ago when, on average, we were seeing about 12,000 or 13,000 net new migrants (per quarter) into Alberta from the rest of the country," he said Wednesday.

The culprit is probably a rising unemployment rate that's the result of tumbling energy prices, Porter said: "The relative attractiveness of Alberta has at least temporarily waned."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Harper newsmaker of the year

SURVEY Stephen Harper began the year facing crater-sized political potholes at home, so he adopted a time-honoured coping mechanism of Canadian prime ministers: he hit the road internationally.

Harper

New York, China, India, South Korea — all were ports of call aimed at burnishing Harper's image at home as a trusted economic helmsman in a time of unprecedented financial uncertainty.

The strategy, it seems, worked like a charm: Harper emerged stronger than ever in his four years in office, a feat that has earned him the title of 2009 Newsmaker of the Year in the annual survey of news organizations by The Canadian Press.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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India emerges as world leader in small cars

India has emerged the leader in small cars, overtaking Japan, as declining sales in Western markets coupled with robust growth in Asia redraws the global map of the auto industry. More than 892,000 basic cars will be sold in India this year, surpassing the 708,034 forecast for Japan, according to J.D. Power and Associates. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World/Business

Philippines **Christmas in an evacuation shelter**

BULLIT MARQUEZ/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Children, all evacuees of Mayon volcano's ongoing mild eruption, queue up for ice cream at an evacuation centre Wednesday. Despite the risk of an imminent explosive eruption of the 2,460-metre Mayon, some residents weary of shelters are conspiring to go back to their abandoned villages for traditional Christmas Eve family gatherings.

Dissident on trial

Diplomats, including Canadian, barred from entering Chinese court

A high-profile Chinese dissident accused of subversion was tried at a two-hour hearing Wednesday that shut out foreign diplomats concerned over a case that reflects the communist government's deep suspicion of calls for political reform.

Liu Xiaobo was detained a year ago, just before the release of an unusually direct appeal for more civil rights in China he co-authored called Charter 08, signed by scores of China's top intellectuals. He faces up to 15 years in jail. The verdict is due Friday.

International human-rights groups and Western nations have heavily criticized Liu's detention. A dozen diplomats, including from Canada, the United States, Britain, Germany and Australia, stood outside the Beijing courthouse in freezing weather, barred from entering, along with a handful of Liu's Chinese supporters.

Liu Xiaobo

"We call on the government of China to release him immediately," said Gregory May, first secretary with the U.S. Embassy.

Liu, 53, a literary critic and former professor, spent 20 months in jail for joining the 1989 student-led protests in Tiananmen Square that were crushed in a military crackdown. In his writings, most published only on the Internet, he has strongly called for civil rights and political reform.

Charter 08 demands a new constitution guaranteeing human rights, the open election of public officials, and freedom of religion and expression. Some 10,000 people have signed it in the past year, though a news blackout and Internet censorship have left most Chinese unaware that it exists.

Liu has been the only person arrested over the charter, but rights groups said several signers have been harassed or fired from their jobs, and warned not to attend the trial or write about it online. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canadian killed in Afghanistan

IED A Canadian soldier, Lt. Andrew Richard Nuttall, has been killed by an improved explosive device in southern Afghanistan.

An Afghan soldier was also killed and an interpreter injured in the blast, which occurred Wednesday in the Panjwaii district. Nuttall, 30, of Prince Rupert, B.C.,was with the 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, based in Edmonton. It is the first death of a Canadian soldier in almost two months.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Objective defeated as balloon parents barred from profiting

COLORADO The parents who carried out the Balloon Boy hoax were sentenced to jail Wednesday and given strict probation conditions that forbid them from earning any money from the spectacle for four years.

Richard Heene was sentenced to 90 days in jail, including 60 days of work release that will let him pursue his job as a construction contractor while serving his time.

His wife, Mayumi, was sentenced to 20 days in jail.

Richard Heene choked back tears as he said he was sorry, especially to the rescue workers who chased down false reports that his six-year-old son had floated away in a balloon on Oct. 15.

"Jay Leno said it best when he said, 'This is a copycat game.' And people will copycat this event. (The Heenes) need to go to jail so people don't do that."
Andrew Lewis, deputy district attorney

It was a stunt designed to generate attention for a reality TV show.

Judge Stephen Schapanski then ordered Heene to begin a 30-day jail term on Jan. 11, delaying the start of the sentence for two weeks so he can spend the holidays with his family. Schapanski allowed Heene to serve the remaining 60 days of his jail term under work release, meaning he can work during the day but spend his nights in jail.

The Heenes' probation will be revoked if they are found to be profiting from any book, TV, movie or other deals related to the stunt.

Deputy District Attorney Andrew Lewis also asked for full restitution to reimburse authorities for the cost of investigating the hoax — an amount that could exceed $50,000 US.

"Jay Leno said it best when he said, 'This is a copycat game,'" Lewis said. "And people will copycat this event. (The Heenes) need to go to jail so people don't do that."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

PHILIPPINES At least 27 people are missing after a passenger ferry collided with a fishing boat in Manila Bay in the Philippines. Philippine coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo says at least 46 people were rescued following the collision early Thursday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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SCANLIFE

The economy ended the year in much better shape than it was last January, but there are five key reasons economists think we're not out of the woods yet. Scan this barcode for the full story.

Business

In **brief**

INTERNET As usual, we can expect the Internet to be rife with potential cyber crimes and annoyances next year — more spam, more fake antivirus software and more computers hijacked by criminals. But 2010 will also see more attacks moving to smartphones, now that the devices are being used more like mobile computers, predict security experts. What's expected to be targeted are applications. "Attackers will probably be devoting more time to creating malware for those devices," said David Cowings of Symantec Security Response.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Task Force readies 2010 report

The federal government's much-ballyhooed Task Force on Financial Literacy is scheduled to release its first report in early 2010 as its 13 members gear up for a cross-country public consultation.

Appointed by Finance Minister Jim Flaherty last June, the task force has the lofty goal of creating Canada's first-ever national strategy on financial literacy.

Although the tide appears to have turned on the recession, task-force members say there is a pressing need for Canada to develop a potent action plan because consumers are deeper in debt than ever before.

145%

Household debt-to-income ratio hit a record 145 per cent in September, so for every $100 of income, Canadians owe $145 in debt.

Faced with job losses, clawed-back benefits and shrinking household incomes, increasing numbers are relying on credit to cover their daily living expenses.

And that troubling trend has critics doubting whether the task force can inspire real change.

Economic woes aside, some experts argue that financial literacy programs are ineffective and amount to little more than a political guise designed to quell calls for more government regulation of the financial sector.

The task force's next step is the release of a consultation document in February.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

California **Luxury penny pinching**

JEFF CHIU/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A salesman shows features of a Buick LaCrosse CXS in Richmond, Calif., Wednesday. Wealthier car buyers are returning to the showroom this holiday season, but they're pinching pennies by choosing smaller models of luxury cars.

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Comment

Season for memories

Relating

Steve Collins

metronews.ca/collins

I have no way of knowing under what circumstances you're reading this, whether you're on your way home for the holidays or headed to work, trying to finish your shopping or just catching your breath.

It would be foolish of me to assume anything about what your holidays might look like, since you might not even know. I hope they're peaceful and spent with those you love, but that can be harder than it sounds.

Tomorrow will be whatever it is, and it often looks nothing like the Christmas cards. Our families have bent into all sorts of surprising shapes, and some of us are trying to make it to two or more Christmases, sometimes in different cities or countries.

Travel at this time of year is rough because it's so often mandatory, and schedules are tight. The weather is predictably unpredictable, and countless people find themselves stranded in airports, in hotels, anywhere but where they planned to be. Mangers, even.

And for many of us, there are empty, unfillable spots at the table, where somebody used to be and never will be again. That hurt gets quieter, but it doesn't go away, and it has a way of flaring up at this time of year. It isn't all Merry Happy.

One of the best Christmases I remember was also one of the worst. My father had died only a couple of months before and the rest of us were going to get together at my sister's, traditional as can be, closing ranks against grief.

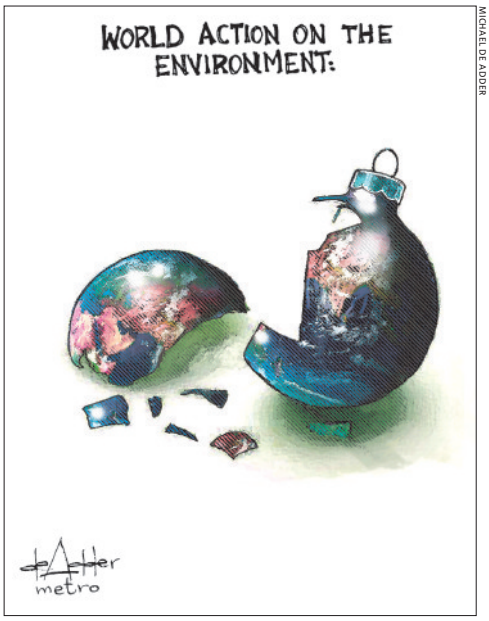
It didn't work out that way. Instead, we got waylaid 300 miles away with a house full of burst pipes and a stack of estate and insurance chores to chew over with a lawyer who didn't want to be there either.

We ended up stuck in a motel room, but we were stuck together. We had some laughs as well as some sobs, and got some laundry done at the coin wash. O holy night.

It wasn't what we expected and this holiday seldom is. Expectations are a big part of the problem, as we all try to transform ourselves from real people to perfect happy families in perfect happy sweaters.

So have yourself a merry little whatever, try to accept the relatives for who they are and who they are trying to be for the occasion. I wish you surpassingly great presents and more hugs than you can handle, but if it doesn't work out, you'll be in good company as we imperfectly celebrate another year of this imperfect, irreplaceable life.

Steve Collins offers his best guesses on relationships for Metro every two weeks.

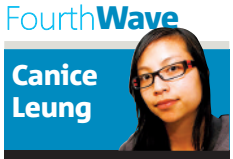


MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

Feminist newsmakers of the past year

FourthWave



Canice Leung

metronews.ca/fourthwave

If you needed any proof that feminism is necessary, all you need to do is look to this year's newsmakers. My feminist heroes for 2009 defended and expanded our ideas of what women can be, while the villains tried to scale them back:

Lady Gaga: There's a savvy woman behind the latex bodysuits and comically oversized sunglasses: Gaga takes her persona to an extreme because she recognizes it is constructed, and she criticizes double standards between female and male musicians (being open about sex undermines her music, while his exploits heighten his). And can you remember the last time a pop star used the F-word? Lady G called a Los Angeles Times writer "a little bit of a feminist, like I am," adding, "women need and want someone to look up to that they feel have the full sense of who they are."

Rihanna: Speaking of singers, here's one that reluctantly championed women's rights. After being assaulted by Chris Brown, Rihanna was silent about the whole ordeal until this fall, when she says she realized her fame afforded her a voice to educate women on domestic abuse.

Lady Gaga

Neda Agha-Soltan: During the disputed Iranian election, Neda was on her way to a pro-reform rally June 20 when a sniper allegedly shot and killed her. The haunting video of her last moments galvanized protesters and lent a face to the thousands shouting to make their votes count. Since the crackdown, the government has harassed and arrested prominent activists — women's rights organizers and Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi among them.

Stephen Harper: In recent years, the prime minister has killed funding for advocacy groups and ideologically neutered Status of Women Canada (a federal policy organization charged with improving the lives of women) by removing the essential "equality" part from its mandate. This September, Harper crowed about cuts to the Court Challenges Program, which financially assists people mounting constitutional court challenges — and called the people that used that funding a "left-wing fringe group."

VANOC: It started when a group of female ski jumpers challenged VANOC's decision to exclude its event at the 2010 Games, but ended Tuesday when the Supreme Court refused to hear its case. Sadly, it's neither the first nor last Olympics-related trampling of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: The City of Vancouver ordered the removal of an anti-Olympic mural, while VANOC demanded a local restaurant named Olympia change its moniker. The heroines in all this are the athletes — some are teenagers fighting for women's rights, while at that age I was busy popping zits and moping.

Canice Leung is a former editor of Ryerson University feminist magazine McClung's, copy editor at Metro, ardent feminist and loudmouth.

Worth mentioning

North Korea gambles with new arms route

North Korea, banned from selling arms by UN sanctions, may have gambled and lost when it dispatched 35 tons of weapons by air rather than by sea as it has done in the past. Authorities seized the plane, which may have been bound for Iran, during a refuelling stop in Thailand.

The 11-day saga remains shrouded in mystery and missing pieces, including the final destination of the Ilyushin Il-76 cargo plane now under Thai custody along with its five-man crew.

Among difficulties facing investigators is a fly-by-night infrastructure seemingly rigged up for the flight, including a Hong Kong-based company reportedly involved that was only incorporated Nov. 2 and whose director could not be traced there or at his address in Spain.

But experts in South Korea say one thing appears clear: North Korea is seeking new ways to bust through a U.S.-led interdiction program of its arms sales.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sanctions

- The UN imposed sanctions in June, banning North Korea from exporting any arms after the communist regime conducted a nuclear test and test-fired missiles.

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84% The number of Canadians who would prefer to receive a meaningful gift that would help someone else, rather than another traditional gift like a pair of socks or a sweater.

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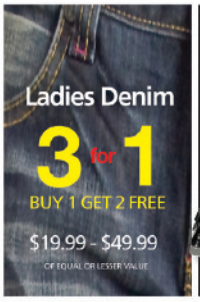

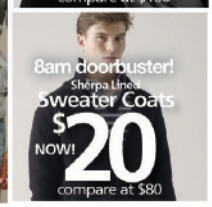

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Jays, Mariners complete trade

The Toronto Blue Jays have completed their trade for Brandon Morrow. They're sending Brandon League and Johermyn Chavez to the Seattle Mariners in exchange. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sports

EDITOR: DON.MCHOULL@METRONEWS.CA

GEOFF HOWE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada's Brayden Schenn is stuffed by Czech Republic goalie Pavel Francouz during world junior exhibition play Wednesday. Canada edged the Czech Republic 3-2 on a goal by Jordan Eberle.

Tough to win gold

They are the home team and therefore the favourite, but winning gold at the world junior hockey championship won't be easy for Canada.

The Swedes, who lost 5-1 to their hosts in the final last year in Ottawa, are back with big goaltender Jacob Markstrom and a fleet of gifted forwards, and the Russians, who lost to Canada in a shootout in the semifinals, should be just as dangerous with Nikita Filatov cruising for goals.

Meanwhile, the Canadians have lost some of their best scorers to the NHL, like John Tavares, Matt Duchene and Evander Kane, as well as the injured Cody Hodgson, and may need to rely more than usual on defence and team play as they try to win a record sixth consecutive gold medal.

"The record is exciting in itself, especially to do it on home soil," said Canadian defenceman Ryan Ellis, one of four Windsor Spitfires on the team. "It's important for us to win this and be part of history.

"It would help if we had a lot of those guys in the NHL, but I think we'll be fine. Everyone will step up and play better than they ever have."

The tournament, officially called the IIHF Under-20 World Championship, kicks off Saturday with Canada playing the first round in Saskatoon in Group A with Slovakia, the U.S., Latvia and Switzerland, while the tighter Group B in Regina has Sweden, Russia, the Czech Republic, Finland and Austria. The final is Jan. 5.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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SCOREBOARD

NHL

WEDNESDAY'S RESULTS

Minnesota 3 Edmonton 1
St. Louis 2 Calgary 1 (SO)
Montreal 5 Carolina 1
N.Y. Islanders 3 Toronto 1
Pittsburgh 8 Ottawa 2
Boston 6 Atlanta 4
Chicago 3 Detroit 0
Dallas 3 Columbus 1
N.Y. Rangers 4 Florida 1
Philadelphia 5 Tampa Bay 2
Phoenix 4 Anaheim 0
Washington 5 Buffalo 2

THURSDAY

No Games Scheduled.

NBA

WEDNESDAY'S RESULTS

Toronto 94 Detroit 64
Denver 124 Atlanta 104
Miami 80 Utah 70
Minnesota 103 New Jersey 99
New Orleans 108 Golden State 102
Oklahoma City 117 Phoenix 113
Orlando 102 Houston 87
Portland 98 San Antonio 94
Washington 109 Milwaukee 97
Cleveland 117 Sacramento 104 (OT)

THURSDAY

No Games Scheduled.

Sports in brief

ALFREDSSON The Ottawa Senators are expected to be without captain Daniel Alfredsson for at least a few weeks after he left late in the first period of Wednesday game in Pittsburgh with a left shoulder injury. "I'll probably see the doctor (Thursday) and do an X-ray and see what the damage is," said Alfredsson, whose arm was in a sling. "But I expect at least a few weeks."

PIERCE Celtics forward Paul Pierce had fluid drained from his right knee Wednesday and will miss the next two weeks. Pierce did not make the flight to Orlando for a Christmas Day game against the Magic.

CRISP The Athletics have finalized a $5.25 million US, one-year contract with free agent outfielder Coco Crisp. The deal announced Wednesday pays Crisp $4.75 million next year and includes a $5.75 million club option for 2011 with a $500,000 buyout.

BRAVES The Atlanta Braves have reached a preliminary agreement on a one-year contract with Troy Glaus, a person with knowledge of the negotiations told The Associated Press.

UMPIRES Major League Baseball ensured its first decade of labour peace since the 1960s by agreeing to a five-year contract with umpires that runs through 2014.

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El Salvador. ..... 9.9 ¢
Jamaica..... 8.9 ¢
Jordan.....3.9 ¢
Kenya from .6.9 ¢
Kuwait.....6.9 ¢
Lebanon ..... 9.9 ¢
Libya.....24.9 ¢
Nepal from .....7.9 ¢
Oman..... 14.9 ¢
Fiji..... 24.9 ¢
Ghana.....9.9 ¢
Greece.....2.9 ¢
Guatemala.... 10.9 ¢
Guyana.....27.9 ¢
Honduras.....15.9 ¢
Iraq from ..... 4.9 ¢
Israel.....2.9 ¢
Italy..... .2.9 ¢
Russia from ..... 2.9 ¢
Saudi Arabia from 3.9 ¢
South Korea.. 2.9 ¢
Sri Lanka.....11.9 ¢
Trinidad..... 4.9 ¢
U.A.E.....16.9 ¢

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Splash out
Longines ladies Dolce Vita watch, $1,750, features 12 numerals set with six diamonds and silver dots. Available at every retailer across Canada that carries Longines. For more, go to longines.com. METRO NEWS SERVICES

HOLIDAY

Shopping Guide

SPECIAL FEATURES EDITOR: STEPHANIE.BOMBA@METRONEWS.CA

Bathing beauties

Rocky Mountain Soap Company's Spicy Mandarin Christmas, $21.50. Includes Large Spicy Mandarin Body Butter, Spicy Mandarin Soap, and Spicy Mandarin Bath Salt. Available at stores across Canada, or at rockymountainsoap.com.

Fruity Foaming Bath Collection, $24 (6 x 40 ml). Comes in six colours and fragrances: Field Berries, Pear-Peony, Grapefruit-Guava, Georgia Peach, Very Lemon and Orange-Cantaloupe. Available at Fruits & Passion stores across Canada. For more, go to fruits-passion.com.

12 Days of Christmas, $74.95, includes a Holiday Bubble Bar, Jingle Spells, and more. Call 1-866-644-5874 or visit lush.ca for more.

Winter White Fresh and Winter White Citrus body wash, $16.50 each; and **Winter White Fresh and Winter White Citrus splash**, $29.50 each. Available at Bath and Body Works stores across Canada. For more, go to bathandbodyworks.com.

MERRY CRANBERRY COLLECTION
Pamper her with cranberry treats from The Body Shop this holiday season. This best-selling holiday favourite collection includes bath and shower gel, soap, lip balm, body butter, frosted shimmer lotion, candles, home fragrance oil, and much more.
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thebodyshop.ca

Jacky Frost, Gingerbread Woman and Snow Woman bath and shower bubbles, $20 each. For more, go to cake beauty.com.

Season's Treatings by Bliss, $45, includes body butter, hand cream and body wash. Available at Sephora. For more, call 1-877-737-4672.

Molton Brown Hand Wash and **Molton Brown Hand Lotion**, $30 each. Available at Murale stores across Canada. For more, go to murale.ca.

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For him
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Holiday Shopping Guide

Hey, good-looking

Braun Series 7 Pulsonic shaver, $279.99-$339.99, features an LCD display screen. Available in department and mass merchandise stores across Canada.

Life Brand Revitalizing Shower Gel Set, $6.99 at Shoppers Drug Mart. For more, go to shoppersdrugmart.ca.

C.O. Bigelow Barber Collection for Him includes **Elixir White Cologne**, $24.50; **Elixir White Hair & Body Wash**, $13; and **Elixir White Ultra-Light Body Lotion**, $13. Available at Bath and Body Works, bathandbodyworks.com.

David Beckham Signature Story for Him, $57 for 50 mL and $69 for 75 mL. Available at drug and department stores across Canada.

Solutions by Vidal Sassoon Haircut Kit, $24.99, is an 18-piece system that includes a barber comb and steel barber shears. Available at Shoppers Drug Mart. For more, go to shoppersdrugmart.ca.

5 easy gift-wrapping tips

Add this to your list of holiday rituals: After trimming the tree and fighting the crowds for door-buster deals, there's the annual hunt for last year's gift wrap and ribbon.

Replacing your misplaced paper, boxes, tape, tissue, ribbon, bows and tags can be expensive if you buy everything. But presenting a beautifully wrapped present doesn't need to cost a lot.

Here are five easy ideas for wrapping an elegant gift and keeping your time and wallet intact.

Twine, baker's string or yarn can be used as ribbon on gifts.

1 Paper: Instead of having different wrapping paper for holidays and birthdays, opt for a roll of sturdy basic brown or white paper from an art or office supply shop. The paper can be decorated any number of ways and made seasonally appropriate with ribbons.

"There are so many things that are waiting around your house that can be used," said Jaimee Zanzinger, an executive editor at RealSimple.com.

2 Ribbon: Instead of a stick-on bow and plastic ribbon, substitute household basics like twine, baker's string or yarn, said MaryElise Cervelli, a gift wrap expert at Milwaukee's Broadway Paper. Other things to try include hair ribbons, lace trim, other bric-a-brac, an old skinny tie or a scarf.

For a fancier look, check out sales at craft or fabric stores and buy grosgrain ribbon by the yard or by the spool.

3 Decorate: If plain paper isn't your thing, jazz it up. Use rubber stamps to add flair to a package, or make your own stamps out of potatoes or sponges. Tie on bits of nature — a holly sprig or fresh pine needles this time of year, dried or fresh flowers in summer.

If you have kids, put them to work finger painting or stamping the paper; even impressions from their own rubber stamps will look festive with the right colour ink.

4 Cut & tape: Zanzinger tries to repurpose old items when she's wrapping gifts and recommends snagging pages from old calendars (circle an important date to give it a theme). Old maps or magazines also work great, as do newspapers (pick the comics for colour, or choose a section based on the gift or the recipient's interests).

Those options don't sing to you? Open your dictionary and turn to a favourite word — say, "merry." Photocopy the text and enlarge it onto whatever size paper you need.

5 Gift tags: Collect the Christmas cards you've received (or buy a box at a discount shop) and bust out the scissors. Cut the fronts into inch-wide strips. Fold the strips in half and you have a tag. Another option is to steal a playing card from an old deck or a board game that's already missing pieces. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Holiday Shopping Guide

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Ben 10 Alien Force Spidermonkey, $7.99. Each set includes two figures, an alien key to unlock body parts and an alien combo card. Spidermonkey comes with **Echo Echo**. Available at Walmart, Toys R Us and Zellers.

RC Camaro, $34.99. Available at Canadian Tire. For more, go to canadiantire.ca.

Helmet Heroes Police Officer, $39.99. Features colourful lights and a microphone so boys can hear themselves broadcast their adventure. Available at Walmart, Zellers and Toys R Us.

G.I. Joe Snake Eyes Ninja figure and **G.I. Joe Tough Trooper**, right, $29.99 each. Available at Walmart, Zellers and Toys R Us.

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Green Toys Recycling Truck, $29.95, made from recycled plastic milk containers. Available at Indigo and Chapters stores across Canada. For more, go to chapters.indigo.ca.

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Holiday Shopping Guide

Did you forget to do your holiday shopping?

Advice for the procrastinator

BRIAN COULTON
for Metro Canada

It's Dec. 24. You settle in front of the tube with a cider to watch It's A Wonderful Life, glance at the gifts under the tree and get the feeling you're forgetting something.

Don't fear, present procrastinator!

Just remember these tips to weather the last-minute holiday shopping hustle:

Prime for lines

Lineups amid your heel-dragging brethren can encourage public fits of frustration due to the claustrophobic combination of chipper Christmas music, flashing lights and other latecomers inadvertently touching you. So zen out by bringing a rousing book or iPod to tune out the lot. Podcasts from programs like CBC's Definitely Not The Opera or NPR's This American Life will make you happy by making light of the human absurdity you're surrounded by.

Be thoughtfully thoughtless

Sure, gift cards aren't the most attentive festive offerings, but they're easy, often have no expiry date and save you from picking a present the recipient may completely hate, thereby ruining your relationship forever all because you waited so long to shop. Plus, it doesn't take much to personalize a plastic rectangle. Consider what the giftee likes (makeup? books? power tools?) and pick a shop with a selection of it. Buy a greeting card, write a schmaltzy message expressing your love, and seal with gift card inside.

When all else fails, remember the two Fs...

Fragrances and full-refund! Perfume and cologne provide a perfect outlet to buy your way out of Christmas neglect. Go expensive: Black Orchid by Tom Ford or Stella by Stella McCartney for ladies; Tabarome by Creed or π (Pi Neo) by Givenchy for guys. If you buy a box set, crack it open and wrap items individually to mask your embarrassingly obvious inclination toward a deal. But whether buying an eau de toilette or toiletries (don't gift toiletries), always ask for the store refund policy and/or obtain a gift receipt. This lets the recipient return your present and get what they really wanted in the first place.

...Unless the stores are closed

If you waited this long, you've really only got two options left: The Internet or cornerstore cigars and scratch-and-wins. For some reason, not everybody appreciates the latter. Instead, use the series of tubes to find a gift you don't need to wait for in the mail. Magazine subscriptions, e-coupons for music and book downloads and getaway bookings are easy point-and-click buys and don't even require wrapping. Simply pen a note proclaiming your thoughtfulness, emphasize how your gift is so superior the recipient must wait to get it, and watch the joy spread across his or her face on Christmas morning.

*Sony Ericsson X1, HTC Magic and BlackBerry Bold 9000 (white) available with new activation on any 3-yr. term voice and data plan having min. $45 monthly service fee. Nokia N86 8MP and LG Eve available with new activation on any 3-yr. term voice and data plan. All other devices featured available with new activation on any 3-yr. term voice plan. Early cancellation fees apply.
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This year in fashion 2009

Hosted by Glen Baxter, a special edition of In Fashion reviews the memorable moments and events that shaped the world of fashion in 2009. Premieres Sunday on CTV. METRO NEWS SERVICE

Style

If the shoe fits... the recipient

Need a last-minute gift idea for the fashionista in your life? Dazzle her with the The Red Shoe Lover's Cell Phone Holder. This bejeweled stand, adorned with fully-faceted crystals, fits most standard headsets and features a built-in grommet for a recharging cable. She will be head over heels for it! Available at The Shoe (thesource.ca) for $9.99.

METRO NEWS SERVICE

EDITOR: ANN-MARIE.COLACINO@METRONEWS.CA

Best and worst '09

Metro polled editors across our 100 editions worldwide to compile this list of who looked great and who didn't this year

Michelle Obama

Dubbed the first lady of fashion, Michelle Obama dazzled us with her sleeveless, strapless, and one-armed gowns, classic sheath dresses and creative accessories over the past year. She helped put budding designers on the map (i.e. Jason Wu) and showed off her modesty with old favourites like J. Crew. Not since Jackie O has the fashion world been so intrigued with the White House.

Best

Diane Kruger

The actress has always been an underground stunner, but she kicked the fashion up a notch while promoting Inglourious Basterds. She's got a knack for wearing pretty pieces that have just the right amount of edge.

Worst

Amber Rose

Never mind that she seems to have pulled it together in recent months, Kanye West's girlfriend spent the majority of 2009 looking like one hot skintight legging-wearing mess.

Mariah Carey

Why our beloved diva insists on squeezing into dresses that are clearly a few sizes too small is beyond us. We wish she'd burn the Spanx and exhale normally.

Best & Worst

Lady Gaga

We loved: Her wild and crazy approach to fashion (see every outfit in her video for Bad Romance and her wardrobe at the MTV VMA awards).

We hated: Her wild and crazy approach to fashion (i.e. that puzzling bolero made of Kermit the frog stuffed animals and that weird hat made of deer antlers).

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Lively lights up Green Lantern

Gossip Girl actress Blake Lively is set to star in new comic book movie Green Lantern. The 22-year-old blonde star is being lined-up to play the love interest of the main character Hal Jordan — who is played by Ryan Reynold. **FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK**

Entertainment

Baby Knoxville

It's a boy for Johnny Knoxville and girlfriend Naomi Nelson. The couple welcomed son Rocko Akira Clapp on Sunday in Los Angeles. The baby weighed in at 8 pounds.

PEOPLE.COM

EDITOR: DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Gilliam creates imaginary world

The Imaginarium of **Doctor Parnassus**

Director: Terry Gilliam
Stars: Heath Ledger, Johnny Depp
Classification: PG
Rating: ⊕⊕⊕½

RICHARD CROUSE
for Metro Canada

As you may have guessed from the title, The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus is an odd movie. Directed by Terry Gilliam, it's the strange tale of a mysterious immortal who complicates his life by making deals with the devil.

Complicating Gilliam's life during production was the unexpected death of his star Heath Ledger but, the show, as they say, must go on and here we are after the untimely January 2008 passing of the young actor, with a completed film. How did Gilliam finish the movie? A new credit, A Film from Heath Ledger and Friends tells the tale.

Three of Ledger's buddies, Johnny Depp (seen dancing on a leaf!), Colin Farrell and Jude Law, stepped in to play "through the looking glass" versions of the late actor.

Set in present day London the film begins with a look at Doctor Parnassus' (Christopher Plummer) bizarre traveling show that offers people a chance to step through Dr.P's magical mirror into an alternate reality. He's selling imagination, but his gift of mind's eye manipulation came with a heavy price.

Eons before he made a trade with the devil (Tom Waits): Remarkable power in exchange for his first born daughter on her sixteenth birthday. That anniversary is now days away but with the help of a mysterious stranger named Tony (played by Ledger, Depp, Law and Farrell) and the magic mirror Dr. P just may be able to save her.

Actor Heath Ledger died unexpected during production of The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus.

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus is more a piece of surrealist art than a traditional movie. Imagine watching a Salvador Dali painting come to life and you'll get the idea. Gilliam, who co-wrote the script as well as directed, has allowed his imagination to run riot.

While the story meanders to and fro he fills the screen with unforgettable images; Old Nick dangling Dr. P from the end of a branch or a multi-eyed hot air balloon shaped like a man's head or the ensemble of skirt wearing, dancing Bobbies. Visually it'll make your eyeballs do the Watusi.

The story, however, may leave some a bit baffled, but so what if it warps the brain a bit? The film oozes Gilliam's trademarked anarchic spirit — he might be the only filmmaker who could replace his leading man with three other actors and actually pull it off — and is the most original movie of the year.

On the web

- For movie trailers, photos and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies.

It's Complicated uncommonly mature

It's **Complicated**

Director: Nancy Meyers
Stars: Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin, Steve Martin
Classification: 14A
Rating: ⊕⊕⊕

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

REVIEW Writer/director Nancy Meyers (Something's Got To Give) is a specialist in romantic comedies about middle-aged women. It's a genre with a built in audience and normally few surprises.

However, there's something different about It's Complicated. This movie actually presents psychologically believable characters and doesn't offer easy happy endings. For a holiday release comedy, it is surprisingly well written despite the Hollywood fantasy elements.

Sure everyone in the movie is ridiculously rich and impossibly attractive, but if Meryl Streep and Alec Baldwin actually had children there probably wouldn't be a fugly kid in the family.

Meryl Streep stars as a divorcee whose youngest child just left for college. Just as she starts planting the seeds for a relationship with a charming architect (Steve Martin), Streep has a drunken rendezvous with her ex-husband (Alec Baldwin) that leads to an affair.

All the expected comic mix-ups and zany shenanigans follow, but what is a pleasant surprise is that they have genuine repercussions for the characters and nothing gets tidied up in an obvious way.

For the most part this is a lighthearted romp, but Nancy Meyers crafts her characters as believable human beings and there is a mature undercurrent of reality rarely found in this sort of movie.

Despite the clever screenplay, this is an actor's movie and Meyers cast the roles well.

Meryl Streep is her expected excellent self, getting plenty of laughs while still creating a three dimensional character. Steve Martin delivers the goods as always, but the real star is Alec Baldwin who steals every scene.

Baldwin has really come into his own as a comic actor in recent years as his burgeoning beer-belly and scotch n' cigars scarred voice began to overcome his leading man looks. It's Complicated might be a little too familiar to be considered a great movie, but it is uncommonly mature for the genre and should please the target audience.

Meryl Streep and Alec Baldwin star in It's Complicated.

- For It's Complicated trailers, photos and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies.

Fun from the start

Downey Jr. and Law perfect in Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes
Director: Guy Ritchie
Stars: Robert Downey Jr., Jude Law
Classification: PG
Rating: ★★★★

NED EHRBAR
for Metro Canada

Robert Downey Jr., left, and Jude Law in Sherlock Holmes.

REVIEW Guy Ritchie's risky re-imagining of literature's most famous detective definitely pays off well, thanks in most part to the sheer charisma of Robert Downey Jr.

As he proved earlier this year in the middling The Soloist, Downey can be great even when the movie around him fails to perform. Luckily, in Sherlock Holmes he doesn't have to.

The film takes all the strokes of genius and superhuman deductive skills usually attributed to Holmes and adds the psychological shortcomings that would naturally go with them. He can't venture out into public without obsessively clocking every odd behavior of his fellow Londoners.

Downey portrays all of this splendidly, as unhinged is one of his better looks. But Holmes is nothing without Watson, and under Ritchie's direction, Jude Law is better than he's been in years. The two are perfect together, stirring up enough chemistry to make Watson's fiancée (Kelly Reilly) feel like an unwanted distraction.

Unfortunately, most of Holmes' ticks are abandoned for the second half, when they get down to the business of unravelling the case at hand, the mysterious resurrection of convicted murderer Lord Blackwood (the menacing Mark Strong).

There are plenty of elaborate action sequences set throughout the grey, muddy, under-construction London, but all the loose ends tie up a bit too neatly in the end — except for those needed to tease a sequel. It's absolute fun from start to finish, but it would be nice if so much of the fun weren't front-loaded.

• For Sherlock Holmes photos, a trailer and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies.

Longoria launches fragrance

Eva Longoria is to launch her own fragrance. The Desperate Housewives actress has created a new scent with Falic Fashion Group and was keen to make something wearable and not overpowering. FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK

Nine is not enough

Musical fails to make transition stage to the big screen

Nine

Director: Rob Marshall
Stars: Daniel Day-Lewis, Penelope Cruz
Classification: PG
Rating: ⊕⊕½

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

Nine marks director Rob Marshall's second attempt to turn a lavish stage show into a big-screen showstopper.

REVIEW Based on a musical (which itself was based on Federico Fellini's classic film 8 ½), Nine marks director Rob Marshall's second attempt to turn a lavish stage show into a big-screen showstopper.

Well why not? After all, he found success with Chicago (which won the Best Picture Oscar in 2003) but unfortunately this Italian-set noodle only ends up al dente.

Daniel Day Lewis plays an admired filmmaker in the 1960s that flees Rome and the set of his latest picture at the outset of a midlife crisis. Paralyzed by a creative deadlock, his quandary is reflected in fantasy sequences as the auteur encounters the women in his life — his enduring wife (Marion Cotillard), mistress (Penelope Cruz), mother (Sophia Loren) and others played by the likes of Nicole Kidman and Kate Hudson.

While a song notably accompanies each female's appearance (and surprisingly, the cast can carry a tune) and is intended to reveal the filmmaker's internal struggle, most of the arrangements are still simply unremarkable with the possible exception of Be Italian, the movie's signature song (performed by Fergie of the Black Eyed Peas).

Marshall helps to compensate with a slick production, opulent sequences and a recurring chorus of scantily-clad dancers but without some fetching songs to support it, Nine does not add up to a momentous musical.

While a scrawny storyline only adds to the film's lack of luster, fans of musicals that are willing to accept the film for its surface glitter may be thrilled. For the rest of us … well, rent 8 ½ on DVD over the holidays to see what goes much better without singing.

• For Nine photos, a trailer and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies

Firth adds dignity to A Single Man

A Single Man

Director: Tom Ford
Stars: Colin Firth, Julianne Moore
Classification: STC
Rating: ⊕⊕

ADAM NAYMAN
for Metro Canada

REVIEW As its double-entendre title suggests, Tom Ford's debut feature A Single Man focuses on an isolated figure: George Falconer, a semi-closeted university professor plying his trade in pre-Stonewall California.

Colin Firth's performance in the role has a credible dignity: we see that George is a man whose gift for sublimating his true feelings — namely, his crippling grief over the death of his younger lover (Matthew Goode) in an automobile accident — has made him a stranger in his own skin.

It's a compellingly understated performance in a film unfortunately more inclined towards grand gestures.

Fashion designer-turned-director Ford favors fussy framings and glossy cinematography, and while he hits upon a few striking ideas — i.e. deploying oversaturated colours to suggest intense physical sensations — the showy technique doesn't serve the material.

The film unfolds rather schematically as a series of encounters between George and characters who prod his suicidal gloom, with the most screen time going to Julianne Moore as a faded tart nurturing an unrequited crush on her old friend.

She's borderline embarrassing, but Nicholas Houpt does better as a student wise to his teacher's condition — obviously, his experience on About a Boy gave him a knack for acting opposite brittle Brits.

• For A Single Man photos, a trailer and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies

Vatican congratulates The Simpsons

TV To put it as the devout Ned Flanders would, the Vatican's newspaper thinks The Simpsons are an okely dokely bunch.

L'Osservatore Romano congratulated the show on its 20th anniversary on Tuesday, praising its philosophical leanings as well as its stinging and often irreverent take on religion.

Without Homer Simpson and the other yellow-skinned characters "many today wouldn't know how to laugh," said the article titled Aristotle's Virtues and Homer's Doughnut.

The paper credited The Simpsons, the longest-running American animated program, with opening up cartoons to an adult audience. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kenya's Style
Kenya Hunt
Exclusively at metronews.ca/globalstyle

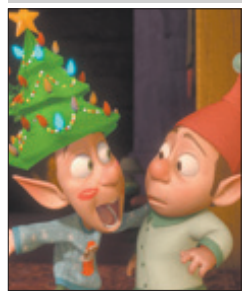
For complete online movie listings, trailers, reviews and tickets, visit: metronews.ca/movies

VA	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime 12/24/09	251	308	3 CBC	Wheel Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Miracle on 34th Street ★★★★ (1947) Maureen O'Hara. (CC)				CBC News: The National (N)		The Hour
	254	-	9 OMNI	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Daddy Tran: A Life in 3-D		A Thousand Miles to Freedom		A Thousand Words (CC)		The Simpsons
	250	321	9 CTV	Corner Gas	Degrassi: TNG	It's a Wonderful Life ★★★★ (1946) James Stewart, Donna Reed. (CC) (DVS)						CTV News
	-	-	10 JOY	Frasier (CC)	The Insider	Gospel Challenge (CC)		Supernatural (CC)		P3	Ek Noor	New Day
	252	336	11 GTV	Entertainment	ET Canada	The Road to Christmas (2006) Jennifer Grey. Premiere. (CC)				Mall Santa (CC)		News
	256	389	12 VI	Kool Countdown (CC)		Santa Baby (2006) Jenny McCarthy, George Wendt. (CC)				Stargate Atlantis		C'mas Choirs
	253	359	13 CITY	Murdoch Mysteries		Scrubs (N)	Better Off Ted	Family	30 Rock	Glenn Martin	Glenn Martin	The CityNews
	-	-	14 CW	The Office	The Office	The Vampire Diaries "Pilot"		Supernatural (CC)		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Frasier (CC)
	289	381	15 CBS	Entertainment	The Insider	CSI: NY "Greater Good"		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.		The Mentalist "Red Sauce"		KIRO 7 News
	287	379	16 NBC	Evening Mag.	Inside Edition	It's a Wonderful Life ★★★★ (1946) James Stewart, Donna Reed. (CC) (DVS)						KING 5 News
	602	568	19 W	Silent Night (2002, Drama) Linda Hamilton, Matthew Harbour.				Me and Luke (2006) Kristopher Turner, Louise Fletcher.				Maxed Out
	288	380	21 ABC	Wheel Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Prep- Landing	The Middle	Family	Cougar Town	Grey's Anatomy (CC)		KOMO 4 News
	-	-	23 KVOS	M*A*S*H	Seinfeld	Peter Pan ★★★ (2003) Jason Isaacs, Jeremy Sumpter.				Seinfeld	King	Cheers (CC)
	291	383	27 PBS	Great Performances (CC)				Christmas With Mormon		Great Performances (CC)		Michael
	290	382	28 FOX	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Bones (PA) (CC)		Fringe (PA) (CC)		Q13 FOX News at Ten (N)		Family Guy
	-	364	45 PBS	Holiday Pops Symphony Orc		Three Tenors Christmas		Christmas Vespers		Christmas at Luther		Christmas
	296	654	34 SBK	The Office	Name Is Earl	Frasier (CC)	'70s Show	South Park	Half & Half	Paid Program	Hatchett	Paid Program
	298	653	35 TLA	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	The Vampire Diaries "Pilot"		Supernatural (CC)		KTLA Prime News (N) (CC)		Friends (CC)
	295	651	36 WGN	WGN News	Bozo, Gar & Ray: WGN TV Classics (CC)				Chicago Own	Midnight Mass Holy Name Cathedral. (CC)		
	297	652	37 WPX	PIX News at Ten Tong. (N)		Two/Half Men	Friends (CC)	Midnight Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral			Scrubs (CC)	George Lopez
	199	311	75 STR	CTV News	Pope John Paul II		King of Kings ★★★ (1961) Jeffrey Hunter. Orson Welles narrates the story of Jesus.					
news	502	390	28 NW	Princesses of the World		CBC News: The National (N)		CBC News: The National (N)		Princesses of the World		National
	500	500	33 CNN	Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)				Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)		Cooper 360
sports	407	419	22 RSP	Sportsnet	Soccercentral	Perfect 10	Reflections		Plays of Year	Sportsnet Connected		Plays of Year
	400	400	30 TSN	SportsCentre	SportsCentre: Year in Review		World Extreme Cagefighting Donald Cerrone vs. Ed Ratcliff.				Timbersports	SportsCentre
	411	457	49 OLN	Ghost Hunters "Irish Ruins"		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Survivorman (CC)		Ghost Hunters "Irish Ruins"		Bounty Hunter
	410	403	54 SCR	Score Now		Top 50 Plays of the Year		Cabbie's Top	Court Cuts	Amazing Hits	Gerry Dee	Final Score
	417	406	55 SC	Barrett-Jackson Automobile Auction From Las Vegas.				Barrett-Jackson Automobile Auction From Las Vegas.				
	416	409	114 GLF	Fútbol						Gol TV News	Gol TV News	Gol TV News
family	552	543	25 YTV	Amer. Funniest Home Videos		Amer. Funniest Home Videos		Mystery Hnt.	Mon. Warriors	Fries That?	Weird Years	Mon. Warriors
	555	545	50 TEL	The Legend of Frosty the Snowman Ice skate. (CC)				Futurama	King of Hill	Batman Returns ★★ (1992) Michael Keaton.		
	557	541	51 FAM	Sonny Chance	Zack & Cody	Overruled!	Han. Montana	Wizards-Place	Latest Buzz	Ned's School	Cory in House	That's-Raven
	553	546	53 TRE	Horton Hears	Zigby Game.	Max & Ruby	Dragon	Backyard	Ni Hao	Go, Diego, Go!	Franklin	Comfy Couch
cable variety	268	354	5 KNO	Noel Noel	Hoppy-Deer	Christmas in Vienna 2005		Canadian Brass-Christmas		Christmas in Vienna 2004		Christmas
	575	583	20 CMT	Home Imp.	Home Imp.	Faith Hill, Joy to the World		Reba (CC)	Reba (CC)	According-Jim	According-Jim	Home Imp.
	570	580	24 MM	Paradise City: Degrassi Goes		Hottest Pop Videos		MuchNews: Top Shockers '09		Love Court	My Date	The Wedge
	600	564	29 H&G	25 Great Holiday Ideas (CC)		A Very Merry Curb Appeal		Carter Can	Style	Decked for the Holidays		Design Inc.
	615	520	31 A&E	The First 48 (CC)		The First 48 (CC)		(:01) The First 48 (CC)		(:01) The First 48 (CC)		The First 48
	628	584	32 SPKE	(6:00) Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back ★★★★ (1980)				Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi ★★★ (1983) Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford.				
	521	560	34 TLC	BBQ Pitmasters (CC)		Little Chocolatiers (CC)		World Chocolate		BBQ Pitmasters (CC)		Driving-Crazy
	616	522	39 SHO	(6:00) His and Her Christmas		Christmas Caper (2007) Shannen Doherty. (CC)				The Christmas Choir (2008) Jason Gedrick.		
	620	523	40 BVO	Man Who Saved C'mas		Law & Order "Wager" (CC)		Without a Trace (CC)		A Wind at My Back Christmas (2001) (CC)		
	601	562	41 SLC	X-Weighted "Heather" (CC)		ET Canada	What	Work Out "In the Mud" (CC)		Brat Camp Fully occupied.		Runway
	520	505	42 DIS	Canada's Worst Driver		Canada's Worst Driver		MythBusters "Prison Escape"		Dirty Jobs "Dirty Chip Maker"		Destroyed
	522	506	44 HIS	Ice Road Truckers (CC)		Ancient Discoveries (CC)		Underworld Histories "Miami"		Life After People (CC)		Santa Claus
	627	528	45 SPC	(6:05) Star Wars: Episode III -- Revenge of the Sith ★★★				(:10) Star Wars: Episode I -- The Phantom Menace ★★ (1999) Liam Neeson.				
	294	650	47 TBS	A Christmas Story ★★★★ (1983, Comedy) Peter Billingsley.				A Christmas Story ★★★★ (1983, Comedy) Peter Billingsley.				Christmas
	619	525	48 TROP	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	The Outer Limits (CC)		ET Canada	TV Made, It	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld
	603	561	52 FN	Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives		Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives		Diner, Drive-In	Diner, Drive-In	Diner, Drive-In	Diner, Drive-In	Diner, Drive-In
	-	-	53 AMC	White C'mas	(:45) White Christmas ★★★ (1954, Musical Comedy) Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye. (CC)						White Christmas ★★★ (CC)	
	626	547	57 COM	Colbert Christmas: Gift		Name Is Earl	Name Is Earl	The Simpsons	South Park	Jeff Dunham Christmas		Denis Leary
	320	621	60 CEN	(6:10) Fugitive Pieces ★★		The Perfect Holiday ★ (2007) Gabrielle Union.			(:45) Fred Claus ★★ (2007, Comedy) Vince Vaughn. (CC)			
	581	566	101 MTV	Jersey Shore (CC)		MTV Live	MTV News	Real World-Road Rules		Jersey Shore (CC)		MTV Live
	261	394	102 V	(6:00) Borrowed Hearts (1997)		Christmas Together		Midnight Mass From Rome (CC)				Paid Program
	-	-	103 MUL	Sewing Maid	Kingdom-Wind	Vancouver	Shaktimaan	Dheeyan Ghar	Sadabahar	Connections	Desi Rhythms	Patrol World

critics'corner

Disney Prep & Landing

Santa's elves suffer job burnout, too. In this charming animated special, Dave Foley gives voice to Wayne, a member of the elite elf team that prepares for and oversees Santa's arrival at children's houses. He was hoping for a promotion; instead, he has to stay where he is and train an annoyingly overzealous new assistant (voice of Derek Richardson). Of course, no Christmas special would be complete without a crisis and a lesson to be learned. 8 PM on ABC



Supernatural

Talk about a bad Santa! In this episode, Sam and Dean (Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles) are checking out some killings in which the victims were yanked up chimneys — ouch! The perp turns out to be a demon who's sort of a Bizarro St. Nick. The brothers are at odds about how to handle Christmas; Dean wants a good old-fashioned celebration, since he won't be around next year, but Sam is in denial in "A Very Supernatural Christmas." 6 PM on WGN WPX

Court blocks Boy George appearance

A British court has blocked an attempt by former Culture Club singer Boy George to appear on a reality television show. The 48-year-old had hoped to appear on Channel 4's ``Celebrity Big Brother'' despite being on probation for assaulting a male escort. THE ASSOCIATED PRESSS

Arkells tops Graham's musical list

GRAHAM ROCKINGHAM
for Metro Canada

1. THE ARKELLS, JACKSON SQUARE (DINE ALONE): This album was actually released late in 2008, but few paid attention until this year when the singles Oh the Boss is Coming and The Ballad of Hugo Chavez made the rock airways. This is an extraordinary debut album by the Hamilton-based band that merges catchy, high-energy hooks with intelligent lyrics. Tracks like Champagne Socialist and John Lennon in 67 leave the Arkells a cut above everyone else right now. And a year of steady touring has forged a fiery live act that will win over any audience.

2. ALEXISONFIRE, OLD CROWS/YOUNG CARDINALS (DINE ALONE): Alexisonfire had already demonstrated strong instrumental chops and a strong sense of lyrical purpose. All it needed was to tone down the screamo vocals and delve into their rock roots. They did all this and more on their fourth album. It all comes together on tracks like The Northern, where the band incorporates the gospel standard Roll Jordan Roll into the chorus, and Emerald Street, where George Pettit shows a journalist's eye for composition

3. LEE HARVEY OSMOND, QUIET EVIL (LATENT): A collective effort that with representation from the Cowboy Junkies, the Skydiggers, Junkhouse that sprang from a Michael Timmins project to musically chronicle the assassination of JFK. The group accomplishes the task in brilliant form in the track, Parkland, named after the Dallas hospital in which the president was pronounced dead. Frontman Tom Wilson describes this dark, sometimes frightening, music as "acid folk."

4. METRIC, FANTASIES (METRIC MUSIC): This album would make the list simply for asking the "would you rather be The Beatles or the Rolling Stones?" But there are 10 solid tracks on this album, including Help I'm Alive. Emily Haines' songwriting keeps getting stronger. It's difficult to understand how this album didn't win the Polaris Prize. Metric, it seems, has become too popular for the indie-addled judges

5. TRAGICALLY HIP, WE ARE THE SAME (UNIVERSAL): We should never take this band for granted. After more than 20 years of recording the truest form of Canadian rock in existence, the Hip pulls together one of their most ambitious projects in the band's catalogue to date.

Bryan picks Plaskett as best

BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI
for Metro Canada

Metro music reviewer Bryan Borzykowski picks Joel Plaskett's Three as one of the best Canadian albums of the year.

1. JOEL PLASKETT THREE (MAPLE-MUSIC/UNIVERSAL): This seminal East Coast rocker has created a lot of good music over the years, but Three is easily his most ambitious effort yet. It should have been a mess — a triple disc, 27-song effort has a lot of potential to go wrong — but nearly every track here is as inspiring as the next. Partnering with Rose Cousins and Ana Egge, who provided stunning harmonies, was genius, while the infectious folk melodies are classic Plaskett.

2. ALEXISONFIRE, OLD CROWS/YOUNG CARDINALS (DINE ALONE): I've never liked Alexisonfire. Their aggressive yells and uneven songwriting didn't do much for me — that is until I heard their fourth disc Old Crows/Young Cardinals. On this record the group has, without question, found their voice. They've discovered the perfect balance between George Pettit's loud, guttural yells and Dallas Green's soaring melodic vocals. The songs are incredibly contagious, especially single Young Cardinals.

3. CHARLES SPEARIN THE HAPPINESS PROJECT (ARTS & CRAFTS/EMI): You know Charles Spearin as the multi-instrumentalist from Do May Say Think and Broken Social Scene, but the artist's most inventive work has to be The Happiness Project. On this record, Spearin interviewed people from his community and set their words to sounds. Horn blasts follow a woman's natural talking melodies on the track Mrs. Morris, while a jazz band plays around with a little girl's words on Vittoria. It's experimental and accessible, but better yet it's passionate, inspiring and a beautiful ode to Spearin's neighbourhood.

4. HANDSOME FURS FACE CONTROL (SUB POP/OUTSIDE): Wolf Parade is one of the more popular indie acts to come out of Canada, but it's the members' side projects that should be front and centre. Handsome Furs is the brainchild of Wolf Parade's guitarist Dan Boeckner and his wife Alexei Perry — and the buzz is definitely competing with his other group. The duo's second disc is a gorgeous collection of gritty synth-heavy rock. It's wildly infectious, especially the Springsteen-esque All We Want, Baby, Is Everything. The more they improve the more Wolf Parade becomes a distant memory.

5. K'NAAN TROUBADOR (A&M/UNIVERSAL): Canadians have known about K'naan — the Somalia-born, Toronto-based rapper — since his fantastic debut in 2006. But, it was this year that the rest of the world finally discovered Keinan Abdi Warsame. That's thanks to his incredible sophomore record Troubador — which blends hip-hop and everything else. It's the subject matter that makes this a memorable effort.

Cineplex | Empire | AMC | Alliance Atlantis | ATNY | Independent

This week's new releases are highlighted in pink.

Screen Times

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., DEC. 25 TO THURS., JAN. 1. TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. COMPLETE LISTINGS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT METRONEWS.CA/MOVIES.

VANCOUVER

OMNIMAX THEATRE SCIENCE WORLD
1455 Quebec St., 604-443-7443

Adrenaline Rush: The Science of Risk (STC) Fri-Thu 4
Beavers (STC) Fri-Thu 2 Sat 8:20
Journey to Mecca in the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta (STC) Fri-Thu 12 Fri 8:20
The Light Before Christmas (STC) Fri-Thu 11-1-3-5 Fri-Sat 7:30

DUNBAR THEATRE
4555 Dunbar Street, 604-222-2991

Sherlock Holmes (PG) Fri 3:45-7 Sat-Wed 1-3:45-7-9:45 Thu 1-3:45-7

FIFTH AVENUE CINEMAS
2110 Burrard Street, 604-734-7469

Broken Embraces (14A) Fri 4-6:50-9:30 Sat-Thu 1:15-4-6:50-9:30
Invictus (PG) Fri 3:45-6:40-9:25 Sat-Thu 1-3:45-6:40-9:25
It's Complicated (PG) Fri 4:15-7-9:40 Sat-Thu 1:30-4:15-7-9:40
Up in the Air (PG) Fri 4:30-7:10-9:35 Sat-Thu 2-4:30-7:10-9:35
The Young Victoria (G) Fri 4:45-7:20-9:45 Sat-Thu 1:45-4:45-7:20-9:45

GRANVILLE
855 Granville St., 604-684-4000

2012 (PG) Sat-Thu 12:45-4:15-8
The Blind Side (PG) Sat-Thu 1-3:50-6:40-9:25
Brothers (PG) Sat-Thu 1:10-4-6:45-9:10
An Education (PG) Sat-Thu 12:55-3:45-7:05-9:30
Ninja Assassin (18A) Sat-Thu 1:15-4:05-7-9:20
Red Cliff (14A) Sat-Thu 12:50-3:55-8:05
Where the Wild Things Are (G) Sat-Thu 1:05-4:10-6:55-9:15

HOLLYWOOD THEATRE
3123 W. Broadway, 604-738-3211
hollywoodtheatre.ca

The Informant! (PG) Sat-Sun 1:30-7:30 Mon-Thu 7:30
The Invention of Lying (PG) Sat-Sun 3:30-9:30 Mon-Thu 9:30
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri

OAKRIDGE
650 West 41st Ave., 604-263-1944

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri 6:45-9 No Passes, Dolby Stereo Digital Sat-Thu 1:30-4-6:45-9
The Princess and the Frog (G) DTS Digital Fri 7-9:25 DTS Digital Sat-Thu 2-4:30-7-9:25
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes, DTS Digital Fri 7:15-10:20 No Passes, DTS Digital Sat-Thu 1:15-4:15-7:15-10:20

PACIFIC CINÉMATHÈQUE
1131 Howe Street, 604-688-3456
cinematheque.bc.ca

Bigger Than Life (STC) Sun 7:15 Mon 9:20 Tue 7:15 Wed 9:20
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri-Sat
Wild River (STC) Sun 9:05 Mon 7:15 Tue 9:05 Wed 7:15

PARK THEATRE
3440 Cambie Street, 604-876-2747

Avatar 3D (14A) Fri 3:30-7:10:15 Sat-Thu 12-3:30-7:10:15

RIDGE THEATRE
3131 Arbutus Street, 604-738-6311

Nine (PG) Fri 4-7-9:30 Sat-Thu 1:30-4-7-9:30

RIO ON BROADWAY
1660 E. Broadway, 604-878-Film
riotheatre.ca

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus (PG) Fri-Thu 1:30-4:15-7-9:40

SCOTIABANK THEATRE
VANCOUVER
900 Burrard St., 604-630-1407

Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri-Sun 12-3:50-7:40-11:15 No Passes Mon-Thu 12-3:50-7:40
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:15-11:30-3-3:20-6:45-7:15-10:40-11
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:40-6:50-9:45
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:15-12:45-3:30-4-7-7:30-10:15-10:45
A Single Man (PG) Fri-Thu 1-4:10-7:05-10:10
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 11:45-3:10-6:40-10
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:10-3:50-7:20-10:20

TINSELTOWN
International Village, 88 West Pender, 3rd floor, 604-806-0799
cinemark.com

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri 12:05-1:25-2:30-3:45-4:55-7:25-9:35
Disney's A Christmas Carol 3D (G) No Passes Fri 12:15-2:40-5-7:20-9:45
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri 1:10-3:30-5:40-7:55-10:05
The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus (PG) No Passes Fri 1:20-4:10-7-9:50
Invictus (PG) Fri 1:15-4:15-7:15-10:10
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri 12:50-2:15-3:40-5:05-6:25-7:45-9:10-10:25
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri 12:25-1:50-3:25-4:40-6:10-7:30-9:10-9:15
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri 12:20-2:50-5:25-8:10:30
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri 12:55-4:05-6:50-9:20
The Road (14A) Fri 7:40-10:20

VANCITY THEATRE
Vancouver International Film Centre
1181 Seymour Street, 604-683-Film
vifc.org

La Danse: The Paris Opera Ballet (STC) Sat-Wed 3-6-9
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri Thu

VAN EAST CINEMA
2290 Commercial Drive, 604-251-1313
vaneast.com

Sherlock Holmes (PG) Fri 7-9:30 Sat-Sun 4:30-7-9:30 Mon-Thu 7-9:30

NORTH SHORE

ESPLANADE 6
200 West Esplanade, 604-983-2762

Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri 4:10-6:40-9:20 No Passes Sat 1:15-4:10-6:40-9:20 Sun-Thu 1:15-4:10-6:40-9:20
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri 3:40-6:50-9:10 Sat-Thu 12:40-3:40-6:50-9:10
Invictus (PG) Fri 3:30-6:30-9:30 Sat-Thu 12:20-3:30-6:30-9:30
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri 3:20-7:15-9:45 Sat-Thu 12:30-3:20-7:15-9:45
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes, Digital Presentation Sat-Thu 1-4-7-9:50
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri 4:30-7:30-10 No Passes Sat-Thu 1:30-4:30-7:30-10

PARK & TILFORD
333 Brooksbank Ave., 604-985-3911

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri 4:45-7:10-9:50 No Passes Sat-Thu 12:20-2:30-4:45-7:10-9:50
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri 4:30-8 No Passes Sat-Thu 1-4:30-8
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri 3:20-6:50-10:10 No Passes Sat-Thu 12-3:20-6:50-10:10
The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus (PG) Fri 3:10-7:10 Sat-Thu 12:10-3:10-7:10
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri 3:30-6:30-9:30 No Passes Sat-Thu 12:30-3:30-6:30-9:30
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri 3:40-6:40-9:40 No Passes Sat-Thu 12:40-3:40-6:40-9:40

RICHMOND

After much anticipation, Avatar was released last week to a strong box office response.

RICHMOND CENTRE 6
6551 #3 Road, 604-273-7173

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri 4:35-7:15-9:40 No Passes Sat-Sun 12:05-2:20-4:35-7:15-9:40 No Passes Mon-Thu 4:35-7:15-9:40
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri 3:25-6:50-10:15 No Passes Sat-Sun 12-3:25-6:50-10:15 No Passes Mon-Thu 3:25-6:50-10:15
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri 3:50-7:20-9:50 Sat-Sun 12:10-3:50-7:20-9:50 Mon-Thu 3:50-7:20-9:50
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri 3:35-7:10-10 No Passes Sat-Sun 12:20-3:35-7:10-10 No Passes Mon-Thu 3:35-7:10-10
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri 3:45-7-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:25-3:45-7-9:30 Mon-Thu 3:45-7-9:30
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri 3:40-7:05-10:05 No Passes Sat-Sun 12:15-3:40-7:05-10:05 No Passes Mon-Thu 3:40-7:05-10:05

SILVERCITY RIVERPORT
14211 Entertainment Way, 604-272-7280

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 11:55-3:40-7:25-10:50
3 Idiots (STC) Fri-Thu 1-5:05-9
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:15-12-1:30-2:30-4-5-6:30-7:20-9-9:40
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11-11:45-2:45-3:30-6:45-7:15-10:30-11
Avatar: An IMAX 3D Experience (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:30-3-6:30-10
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 11:50-3:20-6:50-10:05
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri-Thu 11:05-1:50-4:35-7:30-10:10
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Thu 12:40-3:25-6:45
The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus (PG) Fri-Thu 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:10
Invictus (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-4:15-7:40-11
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:25-3:50-7:05-10:30
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:15-3:30-7:10
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Thu 3:10-9:30
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:20-2:40-7:35-10:20
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:30-3:15-6:40-10:15 No Passes Fri-Thu 12:05-3:45-7:15-10:45
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 9:45
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:50-3:55-6:55-10:25
The Young Victoria (G) Fri-Thu 12:10-6:35

BURNABY

DOLPHIN CINEMAS
4555 E. Hastings St., 604-293-0332

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) Sat-Thu 3-5-7-9
Avatar (14A) Sat-Thu 3:15-6:30-9:45
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri

SILVERCITY METROPOLIS
4700 Kingsway Ave., 604-435-7474

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:35-2-4:30-7-9:40
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:15-11:45-2:50-3:20-6:30-7:10-10:15-10:45
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri-Thu 12:10-3:15-7:15-10
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:40-4-7:40-10:50
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:30-3:30-7-10:05
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:20-1:45-4:15-6:45-9:30
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:15-3:40-7:20-10:40
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 11:55-3:10-6:35-9:45
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:20-3:50-7:30-10:30

STATION SQUARE
220-6200 McKay Ave., 604-434-7711

2012 (PG) Fri 4:15-7:35-10:45 Sat-Sun 1-4:15-7:35-10:45 Mon-Wed 4:15-7:35-10:45 Thu 4:15-7:35
The Blind Side (PG) Fri 4:05-7:05-10:05 Sat-Sun 1:10-4:05-7:05-10:05 Mon-Wed 4:05-7:05-10:05 Thu 4:05-7:05
Brothers (PG) Fri-Wed 7:15-10:15 Thu 7:15
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri 4:25-7:25-10:25 Sat-Sun 1:25-4:25-7:25-10:25 Mon-Wed 4:25-7:25-10:25 Thu 4:25-7:25
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri 4:30-7:30-10:30 Sat-Sun 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:30 Mon-Wed 4:30-7:30-10:30 Thu 4:30-7:30
Invictus (PG) Fri 4-7:10 Sat-Sun 1:05-4-7:10 Mon-Wed 4-7:10 Thu 4-7
Ninja Assassin (18A) Fri-Wed 7:20-10:20 Thu 7:20
Old Dogs (G) Fri 4:20 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:20 Mon-Thu 4:20
Planet 51 (G) Fri 4:15 Sat-Sun 1:15-4:15 Mon-Thu 4:15

NEW WEST/ COQUITLAM

SILVERCITY COQUITLAM
170 Schoolhouse Street, 604-523-2911

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 11:45-3:15-7:05-10:35
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:35-12-1:55-2:25-4:20-4:55-6:45-7:25-9:15-9:50
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:15-5-9:45
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:30-12:15-3:10-4:15-7:8:15-10:45
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 11:50-3:25-7:35-10:45
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri-Thu 1:10-4:30-7:40-10:30
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri 11:40-2:10-4:50-7:20 Sat-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:35
The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus (PG) Fri-Thu 11:55-3:20-6:55-10:05
Invictus (PG) Fri-Thu 12:20-3:35-6:50-10:10
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:35-4-7:20-10:20
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:05-3:05-7:05-10:05
Old Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 10:10
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Thu 12:10-4:10-7:45-10:30
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:45-2:15-4:45-7:15-10
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:40-12:25-2:55-3:50-6:45-7:30-10:10-10:40
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:05-3-6:40-9:55
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-7:15-10:15
The Young Victoria (G) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:30-7:10-10:25

SURREY/WHITE ROCK/LANGLEY

CLOVA
5732-176th St., Surrey, 604-541-9527

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) Sat-Wed 1:30-3:45-7 Thu 1:30-3:45
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri

HOLLYWOOD 3 CINEMA
7125-138th Street, Surrey, 604-592-4441

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 3:45-8:30
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 2-6:45-9:15
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs (G) Fri-Thu 12
Old Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 1:45-6:45
Planet 51 (G) Fri-Thu 12-4:45
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 1:15-4-6:45-9:15

STRAWBERRY HILL GRANDE
12161-72nd Ave, Surrey, 604-501-9400

3 Idiots (STC) Fri-Thu 12:10-4:10-8
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:55-2:20-4:45-7:10-9:30
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1-4:50-9
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:45-3:20-7-10:35
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri-Thu 12:40-3:50-6:45-9:45
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Thu 11:50-2-10-4:30
Invictus (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:30-7:05-10:05
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:20-3:40-6:55-10
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:15-4:15-7:15-10:15
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:25-9:50
Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year (PG) Fri-Thu 6:50-10:10
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:50-4-7:20-10:25
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:05-4:25-7:30-10:20

STUDIO 12 GUILDFORD
15051-101st Ave, Surrey, 604-581-1176

3 Idiots (STC) Sub-Titled, Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri 3:55-7:45 Sub-Titled, Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Sat-Thu 12:20-3:55-7:45
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri 4-4:45-7:30-10 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Sat-Thu 12:15-1:15-2:30-4-4:45-7:30-10
Avatar (14A) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri 5-6:45-9-10:30 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Sat 1-3-5-6:45-9-10:30 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Sun-Thu 1-3-5-6:45-9-10:30
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri 4:30-7:30-10:20 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Sat 12:50-4:30-7:30-10:20 Sun-Thu 12:50-4:30-7:30-10:20
Invictus (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri 3:50-6:55-10:10 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Sat-Thu 12:35-3:50-6:55-10:10
It's Complicated (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri 3:45-6:50-10:05 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Sat-Thu 12:25-3:45-6:50-10:05
Nine (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 4:05-7-10:10
The Princess and the Frog (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri 4:20-7:10-9:45 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Sat-Thu 12:45-4:20-7:10-9:45
Sherlock Holmes (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri 4:15-6:30-7:15-9:30-10:15 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Sat-Thu 12:30-4:15-6:30-7:15-9:30-10:15
Up in the Air (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri 4:10-7:20-9:55 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Sat-Thu 12:55-4:10-7:20-9:55

RIALTO
1732-152nd Street, White Rock, 604-541-9527, criterionheatres.com

It's Complicated (PG) Sat-Wed 2-7-9:20 Thu 2-7
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri
Up in the Air (PG) Sat-Wed 2:15-7:15-9:30 Thu 2:15-7:15

CRITERION 4 WHITE ROCK
2381 King George Highway, 604-531-7456, criterionheatres.com

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Sat-Wed 1-3-7-8:45 No Passes Thu 1-3-7
Avatar (14A) No Passes Sat-Wed 2-6:30-9:35 No Passes Thu 2-6:30
No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri
The Princess and the Frog (G) Sat-Wed 2:20-7:20-9:10 Thu 2:20-7:20
Sherlock Holmes (PG) Sat-Wed 2:10-7:10-9:40 Thu 2:10-7:10

COLOSSUS LANGLEY
20090-91A Ave, Langley, 604-513-8747

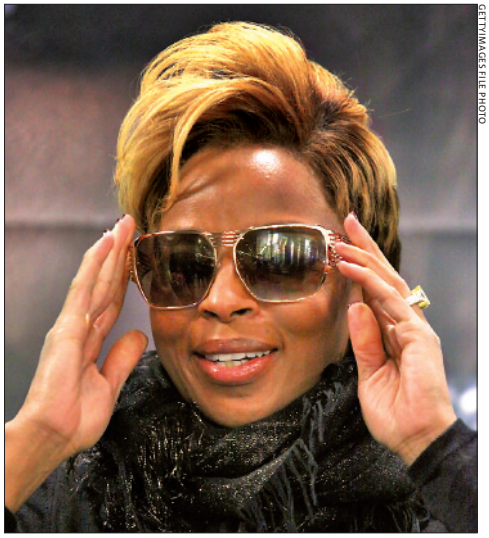
2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 11:40-3:20-6:50-10:20
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:20-1:50-4:15-6:50-9:30 No Passes Fri-Thu 11:55-2:20-4:45-7:15-9:50
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11-12-2:30-3:30-6-7-10-10:30
Avatar: An IMAX 3D Experience (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:30-3-6:30-10
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 12:35-3:50-7:10-10:20
Brothers (PG) Fri-Thu 10:15
Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG) Fri-Thu 12:50-4:10-7:20-10:25
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Thu 12:05-2:45-5:15-7:45
Invictus (PG) Fri-Thu 11:45-3:10-6:40-10:15
It's Complicated (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:40-3:55-6:55-9:55
Nine (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:30-3:35-7:05-10:05
Old Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 11:15-1:40-4:05-6:45-9:35
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Thu 12:20-3:50-6:55-10:10
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:50-2:35-5:7:30-9:55
Sherlock Holmes (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:30-12:15-2:50-3:40-6:45-7:15-10:10-10:30
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:25-3:30-7:10-10
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:45-4:20-7:25-10:25

TWILIGHT DRIVE-IN
260th Street & Fraser Highway, Langley, 604-856-5063

Listings not available at press time.

Y and R star's surrogate has baby

With the help of a surrogate, soap star Michelle Stafford has become a mom. The Young and the Restless star welcomed daughter Natalia Scout Lee on Monday, her rep tells People. **POPEATER.COM**



GETTY IMAGES FILE PHOTO

Mary J. Blige says performing her hits is like therapy.

Blige talks about being a crybaby

Mary J. Blige, who is known as the "queen of hip-hop soul," says she's kept her lofty title because she stays in tune with what younger audiences want to hear.

In a recent interview, Blige — who has won nine Grammy Awards since her debut in 1992 — talked about R&B music, recording a jazz album — and being a crybaby.

Q Would you say that you're a sensitive person?

A I would say that I'm a very sensitive person.

Q Are you crying about the same things that you cried about earlier in your career?

A I think I cry about different things now. I cry because I want to be better than this. I want to continue to grow so, you know, I have to give myself a break. I'm my worst critic. I'm the hardest person on me. I've been like that forever, but I've just learned to give myself a break so even now when I slip ... I don't want to hurt anyone. And I cry when I hurt people unintentionally.

Q How do you react when one of your songs is played on the radio?

A If I hear one of my old songs like Not Gon' Cry or My Life — the My Life album just always makes me stop and just cry, like just bawl. So call me a crybaby, whatever. I'm a woman, too, so sometimes it's just that time.

Q Is it hard to perform those emotional songs when, at this point, you're in a different place?

A For me performing Not Gon' Cry and I'm Goin' Down and My Life — it's like therapy again. I just love the way it makes me feel at the moment and get it out of my system, you know. Those are hurtful places and sometimes you got to revisit for the sake of other people.

Q How would you compare today's R&B music with the '90s music?

A Can I say '80s, too? There is no comparison because the music in the '90s and the '80s was just like, music. You had Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis who were on the radio. Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones everywhere, all over the place. Anita Baker, just so many amazing people. ... I'm not saying the music isn't beautiful now. It's just such a ... it's limited

Q How do you think your fashion style has evolved?

A I mean I've had some disasters, some trials, some errors, some disastrous hair moments and clothing moments, but that's due to the insecurity in me and not knowing what works for me.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cameron appeals to Chinese film industry

MOVIES Hollywood director James Cameron urged China to open its doors to more foreign films, arguing it would boost the local cinema industry after the WTO ruled Beijing was illegally restricting movie and other media imports.

In Beijing to promote his latest sci-fi extravaganza, Avatar, Cameron said Wednesday that China's breakneck economic growth meant it no longer needed measures to protect its film industry.

"China's economy is expanding very, very rapidly. And I think the feeling right now is that perhaps it doesn't need to be protecting itself quite as much," Cameron, the director of blockbusters that include Terminator 2: Judgment Day and Titanic, told reporters. "Chinese filmmakers are very strong ... they're highly respected."

The Chinese government protects local films by limiting the number of film imports on a revenue-sharing basis to 20 a year, a quota that effectively limits Hollywood blockbusters to 20 slots annually.

These and other restrictions have been a key complaint by Western countries, who say that China's rapid rise as a trade power has been in part aided by unfair policies that boost sales of Chinese goods abroad while limiting imports into its market.

"I think that by opening the doors in China to other filmmakers, it will raise the entire film industry in China," Cameron said. "It will get people more excited, there will be more seats, more cinemas, more excitement about the cinema-going experience, which will also raise the Chinese filmmakers' ability to play their films."

GETTY IMAGES FILE PHOTO

James Cameron

On Monday, a World Trade Organization panel upheld a ruling in a case brought by the U.S. government that China was obstructing trade by forcing foreign suppliers to distribute movies, music and books through state-owned companies.

China expressed disappointment at the decision but gave no immediate sign whether it could keep trying to defend the controls.

The WTO case focused on complaints by groups representing music labels such as EMI and Sony Music Entertainment, publishers including McGraw Hill and Simon&Schuster and Hollywood studios Warner Bros., Disney, Paramount, Universal and 20th Century Fox. The groups say the Chinese rules cost them tens of millions of dollars each year in lost business opportunities.

China's box office is booming, but still comparatively small compared to the U.S. market. Government statistics show that revenues surged from 920 million yuan in 2003 to 4.3 billion yuan ($630 million) in 2008 — compared to $9.8 billion in the U.S. last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lewd messages land rapper conviction

COURTS A would-be rapper was convicted Tuesday of harassing Ashanti's mother with a flurry of dirty photos and lewd text messages about the Grammy Award-winning R&B star.

Devar Hurd shook his head as a Manhattan jury delivered its verdict after two days of deliberations, finding him guilty of stalking and aggravated harassment for messages the singer's mother called scary and disgusting.

Hurd, a sometime model and car salesman from Griffith, Indiana, said he thought the crude messages, photos of his genitals and a picture of the home where Ashanti's family lives were welcome.

The 31-year-old is being held without bail until his sentencing, set for Jan. 11. He faces up to two years in prison. His lawyer, Richard Verchick, left court without speaking to reporters and didn't immediately return a phone call afterward.

Ashanti's mother, Tina Douglas, told jurors she didn't know Hurd when he began calling her and leaving messages recounting bizarre and rambling sexual fantasies about the singer. Douglas manages her daughter's multiplatinum-selling career.

Douglas said she told Hurd to leave her alone but he went on to send dozens of revolting text messages and pictures.

"It was just disgusting and humiliating and extremely frightening," Douglas testified, adding that she pulled Ashanti out of a rehearsal of The Wiz after Hurd sent a message that mentioned seeing the singer's car outside the theatre.

Ashanti starred as Dorothy in an off-Broadway revival of the musical this summer.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pastry chef duo back with yet another sweet cookbook
A year doesn't go by that the extremely talented husband-and-wife team Dominique and Cindy Duby don't wow their fans with yet another stunning book on luscious sweets. Chocolate: More Than 50 Decadent Recipes ($19.95, paperback) is available now. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Food

Here's a menu to serve for your New Year's Eve

Here are three wonderful recipes from chef and party planner Trish Magwood to serve family and friends while counting down the hours to 2010. The recipes are from her award-winning cookbook Dish Entertains (HarperCollins).

PHOTO CREDIT

Steamed Mussels Provencale by party planner Trish Magwood (inset) from her book Dish Entertains.

Cheese Souffle

When you remove this from the oven, take it right to the table and serve immediately as it falls quickly. Serve with stewed tomatoes, tomato butter or your favourite chutney.

INGREDIENTS:

- 60 ml (4 tbsp) butter
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) flour
- 425 ml (1 3/4 cups) milk
- 2 ml (1/2 tsp) dry mustard
- Pinch cayenne
- 375 ml (1 1/2 cups) grated aged cheddar
- 6 eggs, separated
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Preheat oven 160 C (325 F).

METHOD:

1. In a heavy pot, add butter and flour, stirring constantly for 2 minutes. Slowly add milk, stirring constantly, and cook until thick and smooth. Add dry mustard and cayenne. Stir in cheese. Set aside to cool.
2. Separate eggs. In one bowl, beat yolks until pale yellow. Season with salt and pepper and set aside. In a separate bowl in a stand mixer or with a hand mixer, beat egg whites until stiff. Add egg yolks to cooled cheese mixture. Fold in egg whites, being careful not to overmix.
3. Pour into ungreased souffle dish. Reduce heat to 150 C (300 F) and bake for 30 to 40 minutes. Don't open oven door until souffle has risen and the top is light golden brown. Serve immediately.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS
WINE MATCH: AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WHITE

Steamed Mussels Provencale

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kg (2 lb) fresh mussels
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil
- 2 large shallots, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (796 ml/28 oz) diced tomatoes, drained
- 250 ml (1 cup) white wine
- 250 ml (1 cup) 35-per-cent cream
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) fresh thyme, chopped
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper, to taste

METHOD:

1. Scrub mussels, removing beards. Discard any that do not close when tapped or those that are cracked. Set aside.
2. In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, heat oil over medium heat. Add shallots and garlic, and cook until fragrant and tender, about 4 minutes.
3. Add diced tomatoes and bring to a boil, stirring, for 3 to 5 minutes. Add white wine and cook for another 5 minutes. Add cream and reduce until it thickens and coats back of spoon. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Add mussels, thyme and parsley and steam, covered, for 3 to 5 minutes or until all mussels open. (Discard any unopened mussels.)
5. Serve with crusty bread to mop up the sauce and a simple green salad.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS
WINE MATCH: SAUVIGNON BLANC

Sticky Toffee Puddings

INGREDIENTS:

Pudding

- 300 ml (1 1/4 cups) water
- 2 ml (1/2 tsp) vanilla
- 2 ml (1/2 tsp) baking soda
- 250 ml (1 cup) dried cranberries
- 175 ml (3/4 cup) butter
- 150 ml (2/3 cup) sugar
- 2 eggs
- 250 ml (1 cup) flour
- 1 ml (1/4 tsp) baking powder

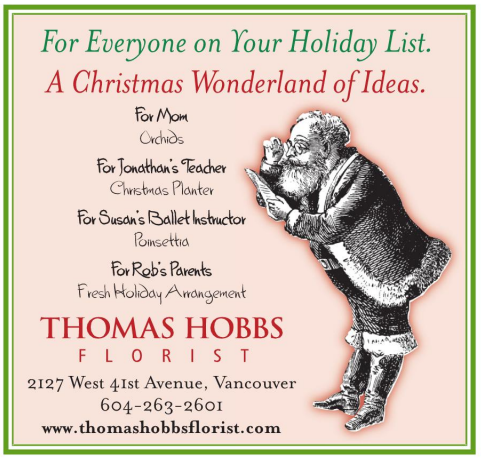
Toffee Sauce

- 250 ml (1 cup) brown sugar
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) butter
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) 35 per cent cream

METHOD:

1. Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Butter 8 125-ml (1/2-cup) ramekins.
2. In a saucepan, bring water to a boil; add vanilla, baking soda and cranberries; set aside to cool.
3. In a bowl and using an electric mixer, cream together butter and sugar. In a separate bowl, lightly beat eggs. Add to butter-sugar mixture. Beat until combined. In another bowl, sift flour and baking powder together and fold into batter. Fold in wet cranberry mixture.
4. Divide mixture evenly among ramekins. Bake for 25 minutes.
5. Toffee Sauce: In a saucepan, combine brown sugar, butter and cream and stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved. Stir until sauce thickens.
6. To serve, run knife around edge and remove puddings from ramekins. Invert on plates and drizzle with toffee sauce.

MAKES 8 SERVINGS
WINE MATCH: TAWNY PORT



Hudson may become a mother once again

Jennifer Hudson is pregnant with her second child just four months after giving birth to baby son David Jr., according to U.S. tabloid reports. She and her fiancé David Otunga discovered the happy news on Dec. 10, according to Star magazine. METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity Buzz

Summer wedding bells for Britney?

JUST REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME YOU PROPOSED, BRIT Britney Spears has been touring Beverly Hills jewelry stores shopping for engagement rings — only her boyfriend, Justin Trawick, doesn't know about it, according to In Touch Weekly. "Britney is ready to marry Jason," a source says "She wants to be with him 24/7." The source adds that Spears is hoping for a summer wedding.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Winehouse tantrum infuriates dad

OH AMY, AMY, AMY Mitch Winehouse is furious with Amy over her alleged theatre attack, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The 58-year-old taxi driver is very unhappy with his daughter, who was hauled into Bethnal Green police station in London yesterday to be questioned about the incident at a pantomime — a traditional musical comedy production, typically performed around Christmas — in Milton Keynes last week.

A source said: "I've never seen Mitch this angry, he is seething. He can't believe Amy would act so stupidly."

The 26-year-old singer reportedly shocked theatregoers when she hurled abuse at the cast of Cinderella, allegedly kicked and punched the front of house manager, and spent more than half an hour of the first act yelling expletives.

Winehouse — who was thought to have been drinking — was eventually dragged out of the theatre by her security staff. Mitch blames Blake Fielder-Civil, the singer's ex-husband who she recently reconciled with, for her wild behaviour.

A source told the Daily Star newspaper: "Her dad thinks her current behaviour is due to spending time with Blake again.."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

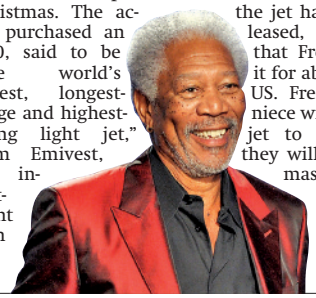
Murphy's death raises drug speculations

THE PLOT THICKENS As the details of Brittany Murphy's are sorted out, some doctors are speculating that a combination of prescription drugs was behind the actress' heart attack earlier this week. "When you have a 32-year-old person dying suddenly, and especially a celebrity in Los Angeles, you can place your bet down that it's going prove to be a case of acute combined drug toxicity," Dr. Cyril Wecht tells the CBS Early Show. Meanwhile, Murphy's husband, Simon Monjack, was apparently left out of her will, as she wrote it before they were married, according to E! News. METRO WORLD NEWS

Freeman's jet set Christmas

MILE HIGH CLUB Avid pilot Morgan Freeman bought himself a new plane for Christmas. The actor purchased an SJ30, said to be "the world's fastest, longest-range and highest-flying light jet," from Emivest, an investment firm in Dubai, according to Gulf News.

The official price tag for the jet has not been released, but it is said that Freeman bought it for about $7 million US. Freeman and his niece will be flying the jet to Dubai, where they will spend Christmas.



METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity tweets

Sean Combs keeps it clean, Stephen Fry is disconnecting for the holidays, Diablo Cody knows how to keep herself motivated, and John Mayer is very strict about Christmas songs.

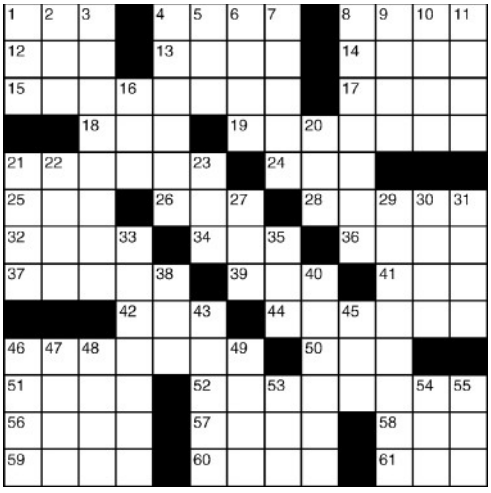
- @iamddiddy Takin a bath. Its a nightly ritual! Its like getting baptized!!!
- @stephenfry Far away from London now. Christmas has started. No phone reception. Hesitant internet. Cut off from the world for a week. Makes me happy.
- @diablocody I listen to "Maniac" from Flashdance all the time. It makes me type really fast
- @johncmayer I don't care what anyone says, holiday music was made to be played on the saxophone and that's that!!!

METRO WORLD NEWS

The Weather Network
TWN incorporates MSC data
Today Partly cloudy 4° / -1°
Friday Mainly sunny 4° / 1°
Saturday Sunny 5° / 0°
You have voted us #1 for best forecasts on TV. Thank you Canada!

For more delicious Metro recipes, visit: **metronews.ca/food**

Take Five



ACROSS

1 Org. that caught Dillinger
4 Carpet type
8 Criticism
12 Bradstreet partner
13 Franc replacement
14 Lasso
15 Helped
17 Do as you're told
18 Greek mountain
19 Cunning
21 Buxom
24 Nevertheless
25 Illustrations
26 Conger, e.g.
28 Bottom point
32 On in years
34 Victory
36 — Strauss jeans
37 Groucho's "tattooed lady"
39 .Spacecraft compartment
41 Enervate
42 Energy
44 Kind of inspiration
46 Do anew
50 Petrol
51 Finished
52 Withstood
56 Catchall abbr.
57 Pace
58 Blunder
59 Otherwise
60 Small salamanders
61 Rotation duration

DOWN

1 Med. watchdog grp.
2 Clear the tables
3 Put one's foot down
4 Elmo's street
5 Shack
6 Belligerent Olympian
7 Devout
8 Direct, as an attack
9 Earring site
10 Tarzan's clique
11 Singer Alicia
16 Altar affirmative
20 Longing
21 Canaanite idol
22 Excessive revelry
23 Evergreen type
27 Back talk
29 Stopped
30 Terrible guy?
31 Mature
33 Tie breaker?
35 Affirmative action
38 Help
40 0 through 9
43 Combine
45 Anatomical duct
46 "When in —, ..."
47 Satan's specialty
48 Disarray
49 Canadian flag symbol
53 Perch
54 Historic time
55 Parched

Sudoku

For more/less challenging Sudoku puzzles, visit metronews.ca

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

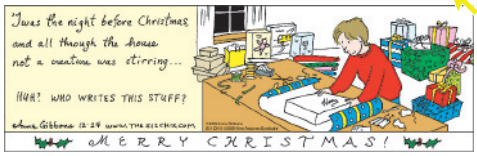
9			6					
4		5		3	7			8
	3	2	1					
						5	3	
5		3				7		6
	2	9						
					4	6	2	
7			3	9		1		5
					5			4

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

1	4	5	9	6	8	3	7	2
3	7	9	1	2	5	4	6	8
2	6	8	3	7	4	1	9	5
7	9	2	5	4	3	6	8	1
5	8	4	6	1	2	7	3	9
6	3	1	8	9	7	5	2	4
9	2	6	7	5	1	8	4	3
4	5	3	2	8	6	9	1	7
8	1	7	4	3	9	2	5	6

On the web

For more games and 60 additional daily cartoon strips, visit metronews.ca



Metro Recipe of the Day

Lemon Garlic Mussels

Submitted by:
Tammy Roy, St. Thomas, ON

INGREDIENTS:
-2 Tablespoon olive oil
-1 Cup vidalia onion diced
-1 chili pepper, sliced in half
-1 bay leaf
-8 Clove garlic, minced
-1 Tablespoon fresh parsley
-1 Tablespoon tarragon, rough chopped
-1 Tablespoon oregano, rough chopped
-1 Tablespoon thyme, rough chopped
-1 lemon, juice of
-1/2 Cup white wine
-2 1/2 Pound mussels, scrubbed and discard any that are not alive
-3 Tablespoon butter
-fresh herbs (to garnish)
-sliced lemon (to garnish)

METHOD:
1. Pour olive oil to cover bottom of a large pan.
2. Add onions, chili pepper and garlic - saute until translucent.
3. Add herbs, lemon and wine.
4. Add mussels - cover and steam for 5 minutes until all are opened.
5. Remove mussels to a large bowl.
6. Keeping the juice in the pan, whisk in the butter and pour over the mussels.
7. Garnish with herbs and lemon.

SERVES 4
PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

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Horoscopes by Sally Brompton sallybrompton.com

For Sally's expanded daily and weekend horoscopes, visit metronews.ca

ARIES ♈
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
Just because it's the holiday season does not mean you should give up on your efforts to impress employers and other important people.

TAURUS ♉
APRIL 21-MAY 21
With Pluto power on your side there is nothing you cannot do or possess. The only danger is you might be a bit too imperious and turn off people.

GEMINI ♊
MAY 22-JUNE 21
Look in the mirror and be honest about what you see. Everyone has faults, but not everyone has the ability to recognize them.

CANCER ♋
JUNE 22-JULY 22
It may be the case that you are expected to do something today that goes against the grain, that compromises your values. Value your principles.

LEO ♌
JULY 23-AUG 23
The planets indicate you have been working too hard and need a rest, but you are unlikely to get one until you change your attitude.

VIRGO ♍
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Don't waste time worrying that what you are planning may not be possible, just get on and do it and before you know it you'll be flying.

LIBRA ♎
SEPT 23-OCT 23
You will have to deal with someone you would prefer to avoid, someone whose attitude you find difficult to take.

SCORPIO ♏
OCT 24-NOV 22
You will be extraordinarily generous today but make sure it is only your friends who benefit from your munificence.

SAGITTARIUS ♐
NOV 23-DEC 21
You don't have to ask anyone's permission to make the major changes that you desire. On the contrary, they'll work out if you seize the initiative

CAPRICORN ♑
DEC 22-JAN 20
Your confidence will go through the roof between now and the new year. You'll feel as if you could take on the world and win – and you can.

AQUARIUS ♒
JAN 21-FEB 18
It's okay to be secretive, especially if what you are planning has the potential to upset those you live or work with.

PISCES ♓
FEB 19-MARCH 20
Take the initiative in group activities and don't be afraid to tell others what they have been doing wrong.

TAKE A BREAK FROM WORK
Visit metronews.ca to watch
metrotube of the day

This day in history

1955 – NORAD Tracks Santa for the first time in what will become an annual Christmas Eve tradition.
1968 – Apollo Program: The crew of Apollo 8 enters into orbit around the Moon, becoming the first humans to do so. They performed 10 lunar orbits and broadcast live TV pictures that became the famous Christmas Eve Broadcast, one of the most watched programs in history.
2003 – The Spanish police thwart an attempt by ETA to detonate 50 kg of explosives at 3:55 p.m. inside Madrid's busy Chamartín Station.

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